

SVĚTLANA: RURAL POLITICAL CULTURE AND RESISTANCE IN POSTWAR CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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A thesis submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the History Department in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Chapel Hill
2019

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ABSTRACT

Mira Markham: Světlana: Rural Political Culture and Resistance in Postwar Czechoslovakia
(under the direction of Chad Bryant)

This thesis examines the role of the wartime partisan movement in shaping anti-Communist resistance in Moravian Wallachia, a rural region in the easternmost corner of the Bohemian lands. The experience of partisan war in this region, as well as the prominence of former partisans in postwar public life, led to the development of a distinctive local political culture opposed to the bureaucratic power of the central state. Local grievances drove former partisans in Moravian Wallachia to mobilize networks and practices of resistance developed during wartime to challenge the consolidating Communist regime. Police agents also drew on partisan practices to reconstitute local opposition and resistance into a prosecutable conspiratorial network that could be understood within the framework of official ideology. Through the case of Světlana, a resistance network that emerged among former partisans in 1948, this paper situates both opposition and repression within a specific local context, demonstrating the complex interactions between state and society in the Czechoslovak countryside and providing a new perspective on the issue of anti-Communist resistance in Czechoslovakia during the Stalinist era.

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INTRODUCTION

On a Sunday night in April 1949, the local Communist Party sponsored a dance at a tavern in the village of Pozděchov, in the hills of Moravian Wallachia. After midnight, the musicians were paid and the guests began to leave, only to find a group of armed men standing at the tavern doors. The men forced the local party chairman outside. One searched his pockets, found his official party document stamp and threw it to the ground. Another pressed a pistol to his chest. “You Communists want to destroy what we fought for,” he spat, tearing the party insignia from the shoulder of the chairman’s jacket, before another guest grabbed him and attempted to wrest his gun away. The man fired, missing his target but hitting a bystander in the leg. When a car suddenly drove past the tavern, the armed men fled into the woods.¹

Police arrived in Pozděchov the following day to take statements from witnesses. The attackers, they learned, were former partisans, members of the armed resistance to German occupation that had been active in the region during the Second World War.² The villagers knew more than they were telling, police suspected. The identity of the armed men was not revealed publicly until the following year, when Alois Šimara, Ludvík Šmotek, and Antonín Kratina, along with thirty other defendants, stood trial in the nearby town of Vsetín. The

¹Archiv bezpečnostních složek (ABS), fond (f.) Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, archivní číslo (arch. č.) 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Františkem Pavlanem, 25 April 1949; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Josefem Bolelouckým, 25 April 1949, 65; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Jaroslavem Kratinou, 25 April 1949, 68; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Světlana—operativní materiál VI/1, Protokol sepsaný s Františkem Hanáčkem, 25 April 1949.

²ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Antonínem Žichou, 25 April 1949, 67.

theater where the trial took place was crowded with workers from local factories.

Loudspeakers broadcast trial proceedings to those outside. The accused men, the prosecutor declared, were members of a conspiratorial network with the enigmatic name of Světlana.³

For the Czechoslovak state, Světlana was a complex, hierarchical organization run along military lines. Its members signed oaths, adopted code names, and received official ranks. On a colorful, hand-drawn map of Světlana's internal structure produced by State Security (*Státní bezpečnost*), the Czechoslovak secret police, Šimara, Šmotek, and Kratina were designated the leading members of the "Světlana Terrorist Group."⁴ This map linked the attack in Pozděchov to an international conspiracy directed by Josef Vávra-Stařík, a leader in the postwar partisan political movement who fled to France after the 1948 Communist coup. Members of Světlana, according to state prosecutors, distributed antistate leaflets, stockpiled arms, provided information to foreign agents, and planned attacks, kidnappings, and assassinations. Their goal was the violent overthrow of the Czechoslovak communist order.

Members of the Světlana network might appear to be ideal participants in the "third resistance," a popular narrative framework for understanding opposition to Communist rule in Czechoslovakia. According to this narrative, Czech patriots fought for national independence and freedom from foreign tyranny during the early years of the Communist regime, just as they had under Austrian rule and Nazi occupation. Members of the resistance were those who, through exceptional personal courage, expressed the essential democratic values of the Czech nation. The third resistance did not succeed politically, as the first and second resistances had. But the suffering of political prisoners won their movement a moral victory by revealing the brutality of the Communist regime. The Communists did not

³ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Státní prokurátora, oddělení Brno, Spis obžalovací, 19 June 1950, 3-4.

⁴ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, miscellaneous envelope.

represent the best traditions of the Czech people, as they claimed to, but rather imposed upon them a foreign, totalitarian system. Světlana's membership, consisting largely of former antifascist partisans, might be seen to demonstrate the continuity of the Czech national struggle for democracy under two tyrannical regimes.⁵

In fact, the story of Světlana highlights the failure of this framework to encompass the complexity of anti-Communist resistance. While the narrative of the third resistance presumes that all actions against the regime were taken in the name of democracy and national sovereignty, many of those accused of participation in the Světlana network were members of the Czechoslovak Communist Party or had fought under officers of the Red Army during wartime. Furthermore, Světlana was infiltrated by State Security almost immediately after its inception. Many of its leaflets were produced in an informant's apartment, on a mimeograph machine provided by police agents.⁶ State Security intercepted and altered Vávra-Stařík's correspondence from France.⁷ The role of provocation in the Světlana network has been noted by a number of journalists and popular historians, for whom

⁵Works addressing Světlana that adopt this framework include Petr Radosta, *Protikomunistický odboj: historický nástin* (Prague: Egem, 1993); Josefa Anna Mazalová-Zemanová, *Budou-li mlčet oni, rozkvílí se kamení* (Brno: J.A. Mazalová-Zemanová, 1994); Václav Veber, *Třetí odboj ČSR v letech 1948-1953* (Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2014). See also Zdeněk Homola et al., *Případ Světlana. Proměny obrazu třetího odboje* (Prague: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2017).

⁶ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, č.j. M-001138/56, Zpráva generálnímu tajemníkovi o případu "Světlana," 26 April 1956, 1; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, podsv. I, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, II/a Pz 244/64, Zpráva o prověřování stížností osob, odsouzených pro činnost v protistátní organizaci "SVĚTLANA," 8 June 1965, 8, 11-12; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol o výsledku—Rudolfa Bezděka, 27 May 1966, 1-2.

⁷ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, Vyjádření k akci "Světlana," Ludvík Hlavačka, 6 February 1956, 2-3; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol o výsledku—Bohuslava Müllera, 31 May 1966, 1; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol o výsledku—Vladimíra Baudyš, 7 June 1966, 1-2.

this case demonstrates the power of State Security to sow terror and repress potential resistance among the rural population.⁸

The third resistance framework has come under significant criticism from Czech academic historians, who have traditionally understood “antistate conspiracies” and “subversive groups” as products of provocation and intrigue by the secret police.⁹ Sociologist Françoise Mayer has described the third resistance framework as the product of political prisoners’ internalization of a status ascribed to them by a repressive regime, a construct of memory designed to win official recognition and material benefits from the post-Communist Czech government.¹⁰ Vítězslav Sommer refers to the concept of the third resistance as a scholarly “dead end” that obscures the diverse motivations and political objectives of those who defied or were accused of defying the Stalinist regime. Rather than combing the history of the Communist era for authentic moral heroes, Sommer calls historians to seek to create a more complex picture of Czechoslovak society, describing acts of resistance within their specific social and political context.¹¹ Similarly, Muriel Blaive argues against the strict conceptual separation, implied in the third resistance framework, between a monolithic, repressive state and a society caught between submission and open revolt. Czechoslovak society was characterized by everyday acts of negotiation between citizens and the regime. Drawing on the work of anthropologist James Scott, Blaive suggests that a

⁸Zdeněk Šedivý, *Světlna. I. čsl. partyzánská brigáda Jana Žižky z Trocnova ve třetím odboji* (Vimperk: Papyrus, 1997); Jaroslav Pospíšil, *Hyeny* (Vizovice: Lípa, 1996) and *Hyeny v akci* (Vizovice: Lípa, 2003).

⁹Michal Kopeček, “Czech Republic: From the Politics of History to Memory as Political Language,” *Cultures of History Forum* (December 2013). <http://www.cultures-of-history.uni-jena.de/debates/czech/czech-republic-from-the-politics-of-history-to-memory-as-political-language> (accessed November 3, 2018).

¹⁰Françoise Meyer, “Vězení jako minulost, odboj jako paměť.” In *Češi a jejich komunismus: Paměť a politická identita* (Prague: Argo, 2009): 166-191.

¹¹Vítězslav Sommer, “Cesta ze slepé uličky “třetího odboje”: Koncepty rezistence a studium socialistické diktatury v Československu,” *Soudobé dějiny* 19, no. 1 (2012): 9-36.

microhistorical approach can best illuminate the “hidden transcripts” that structured both resistance to and collaboration with state power.¹²

The case of Světlana offers an opportunity to examine both opposition and repression during the earliest years of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia in its specific local context. Světlana, I argue, was neither a coherent underground resistance group nor a trap laid by State Security. It was a hybrid creation, the product of local cultures of resistance and the organized partisan political movement, shaped by centrally-directed police provocation as well as by the independent acts of individual agents and informers, resisters, and ordinary farmers and villagers. The motivations of its members must be understood within their specific regional political culture, rooted in local experiences of war and occupation and spread through partisan participation in postwar public life. For former partisans, *zásluhy* — merit proven through effort and sacrifice — legitimated political power. This word, conventionally translated as “merit” or “credit,” and related to the verb “to deserve” (*zasloužit si*) occurs frequently in postwar partisan publications, local government documents, and reported conversations. The renewed Czechoslovak state, partisans and their allies in local government believed, should be led by those who had dedicated themselves to its independence — who had earned *zásluhy* in its liberation.

My study draws from locally-produced sources located in the Zlín State Regional Archive (*Státní okresní archiv Zlín*), and police documents found in the Security Services Archive (*Archiv bezpečnostních složek*) in Prague and Brno. District and village records, including statistical documents, local publications, and memoranda illustrate rural political life and organization during the postwar era. Local chronicles serve as a particularly important source for information on village society and everyday life. They occupy a unique

¹²Muriel Blaive, “Hidden Transcripts and Microhistory as a Comparative Tool: Two Case Studies in Communist Czechoslovakia,” *East Central Europe* 40 (2013): 74-95.

position between the official rhetoric of the central government and the everyday experience of ordinary citizens. The maintenance of these chronicles, a tradition dating from the nineteenth century, has been mandated by law in the Czech lands since 1920, with a brief interruption during the Second World War.¹³ In May 1945, the Czech National Council instructed local chroniclers to act as “objective historians” for the moral edification of future generations of Czechs, producing a retrospective record of war, occupation, and liberation that took account of both local heroism and cowardice.¹⁴ The Communist coup of February 1948 led to changes in local government and forced the replacement of some chroniclers. Chronicles were subject to inspection by Communist district authorities, from whom chroniclers also received training and instructions.¹⁵

Police documents are an important source for any research on anti-Communist resistance during the Stalinist period. Unlike Czechoslovak dissidents of later decades, who left significant records of their underground activities, opponents of the regime during its earliest years produced little written material beyond the leaflets and letters preserved in police archives. Confession statements, written by agents of State Security and signed by individual suspects, serve as a major source for this study.¹⁶ These statements were produced for the purpose of demonstrating suspects’ participation in specific illegal activities. While they provided the basis for the state’s narrative of conspiracy presented at trial, they were not themselves intended for propagandistic purposes. These narratives offer valuable information about the personal and local contexts that shaped each suspect’s actions, as well as of

¹³Václav Pubal, *Kroniky a kronikáři* (Prague: Národní muzeum, 1976), 21, 37.

¹⁴Ibid., 42-44.

¹⁵Ibid., 45.

¹⁶Other studies that make extensive use of confession statements include Tomáš Bursík, *Osud odbojové organizace Černý lev 777* (Prague: Odbor archiv bezpečnostních složek MV ČR, 2007) and Michal Stehlík, *Babické vraždy 1951* (Prague: Academia, 2016). See also Prokop Tomek, “Svazek StB jako historický pramen,” *Soudobé dějiny* 12, no. 1 (2005): 208-214.

suspects' own interpretations of their actions' significance. Confession statements are supplemented and corroborated by contemporary reports by agents of State Security, as well as by documents produced for later internal investigations. Former Světlana prisoners interviewed during the course of these investigations described facing both psychological pressure and physical violence in their initial interrogations. However, they also reported that their confession statements generally represented events accurately, even if they exaggerated the danger their actions posed to the Communist order.¹⁷

The first portion of this study is devoted to an examination of political culture in the Wallachian villages and towns most closely associated with Světlana and the wartime partisan movement. I demonstrate how local officials and former partisans used the memory of partisan war to assert their region's economic and political interests on the national stage. Postwar commemorations provided local leaders with an opportunity to place their region at the center of a narrative of national heroism and sacrifice. The people of Wallachia, they argued, had proven themselves in the fight against German domination, and so deserved special consideration in the reestablished Czechoslovak state. As I show, however, Wallachia remained at the periphery of Czechoslovak economic and political life, despite its symbolic importance in the mythology of Czech national resistance. This culture of *zásluhy* corresponded with populist trends in Czechoslovak national politics, but also laid the groundwork for resistance to the centralizing Communist regime after 1948.

I then examine the stories of Josef Vávra-Stařík, Rudolf Lenhard, and Alois Šimara, tracing the specific events that made possible both the attack in Pozděchov in April 1949 and

¹⁷ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inventární číslo (inv. č.) 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, podsvazek (podsv.) č. 2, Protokol o výsledku — Ladislav Sýkora, 25 January 1966, 4; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol o výsledku — Josef Bureš, 26 January 1966, 4; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol o výsledku — Josef Matúš, 25 January 1966, 4; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol o výsledku — Marie Vajdová, 24 January 1966, 1.

the trial in Vsetín in June 1950. These interlocking stories demonstrate how networks, practices, and cultures of resistance, established during wartime and reinforced through postwar political organization, were mobilized against the consolidating Communist regime. They also reveal how the state used these same partisan transcripts to capture resisters, producing an apparently coherent antistate conspiracy whose prosecution served to demonstrate the regime's power at the local level.

CHAPTER 1

In the mid-twentieth century, Moravian Wallachia remained a poor and remote region dominated by small-scale agriculture. Located in the easternmost corner of the Bohemian lands, it was known for its hilly terrain, distinctive folk culture, and traditions of rebellion. Its specific identity was shaped by eighteenth and nineteenth-century ethnographers, who described its inhabitants' bold nature and hardy physiques. For the writer Josef Herman Agapit Gallaš, Wallachia was a pastoral idyll. "All Wallachians . . . dwell in the mountains," he wrote, "where they lead the Arcadian lives of shepherds and love music, particularly bagpipes."¹⁸ Twentieth-century writers were more likely to emphasize the region's poverty, but their depictions of a land "where bread ends and stone begins" contain elements of earlier romantic traditions. The landscape of Wallachia, wrote Metoděj Jahn, shaped the "rough, tenacious, unyielding spirit" of its people.¹⁹ It was this spirit that led the people of Wallachia to rise against the Habsburg armies during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) and to protect the frontiers against Turkish raids and Hungarian rebels. Ethnographers and folklore collectors established a framework for understanding the partisan movement in Wallachia. After the Second World War, journalists, politicians, and former partisans alike explained armed resistance in this region with reference to its people's rebellious, freedom-loving nature.

¹⁸Quoted in Miroslav Válka, "Valašsko a jeho lidová kultura v národopisné publicistice a odborné literatuře," in *Valašsko: Historie a kultura*, eds. Svatava Urbanová, Lumír Dokoupil, Jakub Ivánek, and Petr Kadlec (Ostrava: Filozofická fakulta Ostravské univerzity, 2014), 18.

¹⁹Metoděj Jahn, "Povaha Valachů," in *Lidová čítanka moravská*, ed. František Bílý (Telč: Emil Šolc, 1907), 408.

Wallachia's location along the Slovak border, as well as its hilly terrain, provided its inhabitants with opportunities for resistance from the earliest months of the Nazi occupation. Authorities in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia failed to prevent farmers and villagers from maintaining economic ties with their Slovak neighbors, or from assisting Czechs seeking to escape abroad through Slovakia. After the destruction of the Slovak National Uprising in 1944, members of the First Czechoslovak Partisan Brigade of Jan Žižka — Czechs, Slovaks, and Soviet citizens, led by officers of the Red Army — established themselves in the Wallachian hills. During the final months of the war, partisans carried out sabotage of transportation and communication infrastructure, attacked and disarmed German soldiers and officials, and distributed fliers calling for resistance. Their survival depended on the cooperation of local villagers and farmers, upon whom they relied for food, shelter, and protection from the authorities. Local men joined the partisans' ranks, and village leaders provided them with assistance. Members of the gendarmerie in the towns of Vlachovice and Valašské Klobouky cooperated with the partisans, while in the village of Újezd the parish priest, Vladimír Růčka, supplied them with food and medicine.²⁰ Just weeks before the end of the war, an SS unit arrived in the region and began a campaign of retribution against civilians suspected of harboring partisans. On April 19, 1945, SS officers razed the settlement of Ploština, burning twenty-four civilians alive. Four days later, the same unit committed a similar massacre in nearby Prlov, leaving twenty-three dead. On May 2, just before the approach of the Red Army, German soldiers destroyed eight houses near Lačnov and arrested their inhabitants, later executing four of them.

²⁰SOKA Zlín, f. MNV Újezd, inv. č. 1, Obecní kronika 1924-1955, 63; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2161/Brno, Žitňák Josef a spol., podsv. 2., Protokol o výsledku obviněného — Vladimír Růčka, 28 April 1959, 1-2; ABS, f. Personální spisy ministerstva vnitra, inv. č. 868 František Šmiták 17.11.1911, Výpis činnosti, 25 September 1945, 59; ABS, f. N 7, Okresní správa SNB Gottwaldov, Velitel'stvo stanice ZNB Vlachovice, inv. č. 113, Dôležité udalosti v obvodu stanice z obdobia rokov 1939-46, 3; ABS, f. N 7, Okresní správa SNB Gottwaldov, Obvodné oddelenie VB — Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. 104, Dôležité udalosti v obvodu stanice z obdobia rokov 1939-46, 3.

What motivated these farmers and villagers to assist the partisans, to share their food and their homes, and to risk their lives? Postwar partisan publications suggest that ordinary citizens eagerly agreed to assist in the struggle. “We were like one family with the partisans,” wrote the farmer František Ptáček in an account published in 1948. “Oh, poor partisans, what you lived through! And what we lived through with you!”²¹ In his confession statement, taken after his arrest one year later, Ptáček described his relationship to the partisans somewhat differently. “Our experiences in the year 1945 were terrible. . . . Some tens of partisans came to us and our task was to cook food for them, wash their clothes, shelter them. The worst was that I had to let them in sometimes three times a night . . . so some would come in at nine at night, I would have to go to the barn to get them hay, the second group would come in at one o’clock, and I never knew if it would be partisans or Germans, but I always had to open the door whoever it was, and then the third group would come in at five in the morning.”²² Ptáček feared German retribution, but the occupiers were not the only ones capable of exacting revenge. One woman from Ploština was accused of betrayal and executed by the partisans in March 1945.²³

Contemporary records reveal a complex and contradictory relationship between the partisans and rural society. One observer from the village of Vysoké Pole described the partisans as careless and poorly disciplined, showing up in the village drunk and shooting their pistols into the air as they pasted leaflets calling on the population to resist. But they retained the villagers’ support: “When the Germans came the following day to remove the

²¹Josef Filgas and Vladislav Vaňák, *Ploština v plamenech* (Nový Jičín: Vladislav Vaňák, 1948), 204.

²²ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Františkem Ptáčkem, 18 August 1949, 2.

²³SOkA Zlín, f. FÚ Újezd, inv. č. 111, *Ploština žaluje! Historie odboje a utrpení valašské paseky*—P. VI. Růčka—9. duben 1947, 7.

partisans' announcements, no one betrayed them."²⁴ According to Vladimír Růčka, the partisans' presence raised villagers' spirits, suggesting that the day of liberation was soon at hand.²⁵ While local officials from Újezd proudly described their community's efforts in the resistance, one former partisan reported that the people of Újezd called the partisans "just a bunch of thieves."²⁶ A villager from Vysoké Pole, himself described as a partisan, recounted that "most of the partisans were scoundrels—when they should have fought and protected [us] then they weren't there."²⁷

Immediately after the Second World War, however, former partisans and local officials cooperated closely to memorialize and publicize the region's wartime sacrifices. In the postwar discourse of commemoration, the partisans and the farmers who supported them shared a cause—that of national liberation. Prominent citizens and former partisans from Valašské Klobouky, Horní Lideč, Lačnov, Vysoké Pole, and other villages in the region organized a memorial ceremony at Ploština in August 1945. Three delegates visited Prague to prepare for the ceremony, where they met with high-ranking government officials and arranged for photographs from Ploština to be displayed in the Melantrich building on Wenceslas Square.²⁸ At the ceremony, General Miloš Žák and Deputy Prime Minister Josef David awarded the victims of the massacre with state medals.²⁹ The memorial committee

²⁴SOKA Zlín, f. Nšk Vysoké Pole, inv. č. 163, Kronika obecní školy ve Vys. Poli, 56-57.

²⁵SOKA Zlín, f. FÚ Újezd, inv. č. 111, *Ploština žaluje! Historie odboje a utrpení valašské paseky*—P. VI. Růčka—9. duben 1947, 11.

²⁶SOKA Zlín, MNV Újezd 1947-1978, inv. č. 194, Kino - zařízení, provoz, letter from MNV Újezd to Ministry of Information, film division, October 28, 1947, unpaginated; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Lenhard Rudolf a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ferdinandem Bryndzou, 18 March 1949, 1.

²⁷ABS, f. Personální spisy ministerstva vnitra, inv. č. 868 František Šmiták 17.11.1911, Výpis činnosti, 25 September 1945, 59; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Šimara Alois a spol., Zápis o výpovědi s podezřelým Mozgou Františkem, 19 September 1949, 2.

²⁸SOKA Zlín, f. MěstNV Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. 185, Ploština — tryzna za padlé pasekáři a partyzány, 17-18.

²⁹J. Balcárek, "Národní tryzna na Ploštině," *Naše pravda*, 22 August 1945.

solicited and received donations from across the country on behalf of the victims and their relatives.

Through commemorative and charitable activity, local actors placed this peripheral region at the center of the Czechoslovak fight for national liberation. Their identification with the partisans allowed the people of remote Wallachia to become ideal Czechs, symbols of national heroism and suffering. Ladislav Frajt, a village teacher, adapted one Ploština survivor's dramatic story of escape for the Brno newspaper *Rovnost*.³⁰ Vladimír Růčka published a small book celebrating the Ploština farmers' resistance and commemorating their victimhood: "Our sacrifice is simple and modest, the humble sacrifice of a mountainous land, the heroism of a humble people, who have never seen ancient and glorious Prague — but for whom it is enough that it is free and liberated, that the Czech nation is again the master of the Czech lands!"³¹ *Ploština in Flames*, a chronicle published by former partisans, connected the burning of Ploština to the martyrdom of Jan Hus and the destruction of a rebellious Wallachian village during the Thirty Years' War: "They burned [them] alive... for truth, for our national truth, for our freedom."³²

The partisan struggle in Wallachia legitimated a national narrative of resistance, martyrdom and triumph. Local charitable efforts received a national response: the survivors from Ploština and Prlov received donations from Prague, Olomouc, and eastern Bohemia. An amateur theater group from a village near Brno put on the play *Hill Farmers [Pasekáři]*, set in the Wallachian countryside, to raise money for relief efforts: "We were deeply moved to read of the Nazis' bestially cruel rampage in your community during the final years of the German reign of terror in our country... and so we decided to show our citizens a picture of

³⁰Ladislav Frajt, "Únik z plamenného hrobu," *Rovnost*, 2 September 1945.

³¹SOkA Zlín, f. FÚ Újezd, inv. č. 111, *Ploština žaluje! Historie odboje a utrpení valašské paseky*—P. VI. Růčka—9. duben 1947, 36.

³²Filgas and Vaňák, *Ploština v plamenech*, 188.

the lives of the poor, but good and most importantly genuinely Czech hill farmers from our beautiful Wallachia.”³³

Commemorations of Wallachian heroism legitimated local political and economic interests. At the Ploština ceremony in August 1945, officials from nearby villages received promises from Deputy Prime Minister Josef David for assistance with rebuilding and modernization efforts.³⁴ Seeking to acquire a confiscated property from the Ministry of Agriculture to establish a cultural center, the Vysoké Pole local committee reminded the government of their citizens’ wartime sacrifices, concluding that “the... people of our poor mountain village surely deserve the state’s cooperation in this matter, as they have demonstrated their loyalty to our country and nation during the most difficult times.”³⁵ Officials in Újezd enclosed Růčka’s pamphlet with a letter to the Ministry of Information requesting the establishment of a cinema hall in the village.³⁶

Local officials described the economic improvement of Wallachia as a moral test for the renewed Czechoslovak state. Previous regimes had overlooked this region, resulting in impoverishment and backwardness. In December 1945, the Social Democratic Party in Valašské Klobouky passed a resolution calling for national politicians to “take account of the needs of this region.” The people of Wallachia, they argued, were rightfully distrustful of the central government, which had offered it nothing but unfulfilled promises. They called for the establishment of factories and schools and requested the assistance of agricultural experts to

³³SOkA Zlín, f. MěstNV Val. Klobouky, inv. č. 185, Ploština — tryzna za padlé pasekáři a partyzány, 1-2, 6-8.

³⁴SOkA Zlín, f. MNV Vysoké Pole 1946-1951, inv. č. 77, Konfiskát lesního majetku Edeltrudy Rainer-Harbach — myslivna čp. 80 a jednání o směně myslivny za dům čp. 156 ve Vysokém Poli, letter from MNV Vysoké Pole to Ministry of Agriculture, 16 January 1947.

³⁵SOkA Zlín, MNV Vysoké Pole 1946-1951, inv. č. 77, Konfiskát lesního majetku Edeltrudy Rainer-Harbach — myslivna čp. 80 a jednání o směně myslivny za dům čp. 156 ve Vysokém Poli, letter from MNV Vysoké Pole to Ministry of Agriculture, 18 October 1947.

³⁶SOkA Zlín, MNV Újezd 1947-1978, inv. č. 194, Kino—zařízení, provoz, letter from MNV Újezd to Ministry of Information, film division, 28 October 1947.

modernize the region. “The Wallachian people are essentially good,” they concluded. “Nationally speaking, they are in first place, as they demonstrated in the resistance to the German occupiers, and therefore it would be fitting for the poor people of Wallachia to be considered above all.”³⁷ Similarly, officials in Vysoké Pole called for the Ministry of Agriculture not to act as a “capitalist enterprise, operating according to its own narrow interests, but [as] the enterprise of a democratic state, where the interests of the people are highest.” The people’s interest, they wrote, demanded that “our people in this poor mountain region, where want, backwardness, and alcoholism have reigned for so long, also have the opportunity for cultural development.”³⁸ Despite their poverty, local officials stressed, the people of Wallachia had demonstrated their essential national honor under Nazi occupation. The liberated state now had the duty to repay them for their sacrifice by assisting them in becoming better modern citizens.

While officials corresponding with the central government emphasized the need for modernization and transformation, publications by postwar partisan political organizations described Wallachia as a model for postwar Czechoslovakia. The region’s traditions of rebellion imbued its people with “a desire for true equality, justice, and true human freedom, that is, the true and unfalsified democracy according to the popular government of today.”³⁹ The mountains had provided a refuge for lovers of freedom since time immemorial, preserving Czech and Slavic democratic traditions from corruption. While the urban bourgeoisie passively accepted occupation, the poor Wallachians acted to preserve their

³⁷SOkA Zlín, f. MěstNV Valašské Klobouky 1946-1959, inv. č. 601, Spolupráce se spol. organizacemi, Sekretariát československé strany sociálně-demokratické ve Val. Kloboukách—Rezoluce, 16 December 1945, 2.

³⁸SOkA Zlín, f. MNV Vysoké Pole 1946-1951, inv. č. 77, Konfiskát lesního majetku Edeltrudy Rainer-Harbach—myslivna čp. 80 a jednání o směně myslivny za dům čp. 156 ve Vysokém Poli, letter from MNV Vysoké Pole to Ministry of Agriculture, January 16, 1947.

³⁹ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670 Brno, arch. č. 95/S0, Národopisná Morava—Světлана, historický původ, “I zastavil trám z plamenů a začal hřímat jako osud.”

honor and ideals. The society of the hills was democratic, egalitarian, and national, a society of mutual solidarity, capable of preserving national culture and protecting itself against outsiders.

The experience of partisan war and the prominence of former partisans in Wallachian public life led to the development of a specific regional political culture. The renewed Czechoslovak state, partisans and their allies believed, should be led by those who had dedicated themselves to its independence. These patriots would be charged with purifying the nation, eliminating the influence of traitors and collaborators, and protecting those who had steadfastly remained loyal to the Czechoslovak state. The sacrifices of Ploština and Prlov would be honored not only with ceremonies and medals, but by accounting for Wallachian interests at the highest levels of political power.

This partisan culture of *zásluhy* reflected broader trends in Czech society during the postwar era. The experience of war and occupation had transformed the content of Czech national identity. Urban intellectuals in the resistance had begun reconsidering the state's social and economic structure prior to liberation. The renewed Czechoslovak Republic, they resolved, would be a socialist democracy that combined "the ideals of civic, political, and spiritual freedom [and] social justice," as the literary theorist and resistance member Václav Černý wrote.⁴⁰ The liberal government of the interwar period had failed to protect Czechoslovakia from its enemies within and without. The Czechoslovak state had been betrayed by its foreign allies and by its own political and economic elites, but its people had remained faithful. The brave farmers of the Wallachian hills epitomized this patriotism. In 1946, Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš welcomed a delegation from Valašské Klobouky at Prague Castle. "I know that you are from a region where many fought as

⁴⁰Quoted in Bradley Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 47.

partisans,” he declared, accepting their gift of a pair of traditional woolen slippers. “I also know that throughout the difficult times in your region... all in Wallachia remained faithfully devoted to the republic.”⁴¹

Throughout postwar Czechoslovakia, former partisans were a highly influential national political force. They successfully demanded preferential access to confiscated German property in the borderlands and employment in nationalized industries and the civil service. The postwar government saw former partisans as allies in the establishment of a secure national state. In the Czech borderlands, partisans participated in the ethnic cleansing of the German population. In Slovakia and eastern Moravia, partisans assisted police officers in actions against members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army fleeing the Soviet Union for the West.⁴²

Networks established during the partisan struggle quickly transformed into instruments of local economic and political power. Partkol, a partisan-led work collective, was founded in Zlín by members of the First Czechoslovak Partisan Brigade of Jan Žižka, headed by Josef Vávra-Stařík. It organized craftsmen and artists from Moravia and Slovakia, using its profits to support former partisans and their families. Partkol demonstrated that “partisans are capable of working for the republic just as well as they fought for it,” stated an article in the official magazine of the national Union of Czech Partisans. This article ended with a call for all Czechoslovak partisans to support similar efforts in their own communities: “When partisans have economic power, then their other demands will be easily fulfilled.”⁴³ In

⁴¹SOKA Zlín, f. MěstNV Valašské Klobouky 1946-1959, inv. č. 317, Ostatní písemnosti, Článek o navštěvě klobucké delegace u prezidenta Beneše 1946, 15 January 1946.

⁴²David Gerlach, *The Economy of Ethnic Cleansing: The Transformation of the German-Czech Borderlands after World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 127; ABS, f. N 7, Okresní správa SNB Gottwaldov, Velitel'stvo stanice ZNB Vlachovice, inv. č. 112, Staniční služební kniha od roku 1947, 4 November 1947.

⁴³Quoted in Homola, *Případ Světlana. Proměny obrazu třetího odboje*, 19.

sum, the Wallachians' *zásluhy* in the liberation of Czechoslovakia appeared to have transformed their relationship to the Czechoslovak state. After the Second World War, Wallachia would no longer be an impoverished backwater, but a site of national martyrdom and victory. The self-confident partisan political movement, a pillar of the postwar order, ensured its new position.

CHAPTER 2

Despite the promises of officials in Prague and the hopes of local leaders, reconstruction and modernization efforts proceeded with difficulty during the postwar period. Wartime damage to the region's already inadequate transportation infrastructure hampered everyday matters of state administration.⁴⁴ Local officials were unable to meet demands placed on them by state bureaucracies. Teachers complained about wartime damage to school buildings and a lack of books and other supplies. After the war, many local teachers requested transfers to the borderlands.⁴⁵ Their replacements often did not stay long in their new positions before themselves requesting transfers.⁴⁶ While citizens and villages alike had access to state funds to replace property damaged during the war, such funds were not always properly managed. The people of Nedašova Lhota received only meager compensation for damages to their property because the funds available in the district capital had been depleted. According to the local chronicler, residents of a nearby village, which had seen no war damage, successfully claimed reparations from the state.⁴⁷ The state provided some

⁴⁴SOkA Zlín, f. AO Nedašova Lhota, inv. č. 1, Pamětní kniha obce Nedašova Lhota, 107, 119; SOkA Zlín, f. MNV Újezd, inv. č. 1, Obecní kronika 1924-1955, 87; ABS, f. N 7, Okresní správa SNB Gottwaldov, Obvodné oddelenie ZB — Vizovice, inv. č. 110, Správy o politickej, hospodarskej, a bezpečnostnej situácii v obvode stanice, 1 March 1946, 18.

⁴⁵SOkA Zlín, f. ZŠ Drnovice, inv. č. 94, Školní kronika, 63-68; SOkA Zlín, f. Nšk Vysoké Pole, inv. č. 163, Kronika obecní školy ve Vys. Poli, 39-46, 67-83; SOkA Zlín, f. Nšk Újezd, inv. č. 212, Školní kronika, 1944-46, unpaginated; ABS, f. N 7, Okresní správa SNB Gottwaldov, Obvodné oddelenie ZB — Vizovice, inv. č. 110, Správy o politickej, hospodarskej, a bezpečnostnej situácii v obvode stanice, 25 March 1946, 21.

⁴⁶See SOkA Zlín, f. Nšk Vysoké Pole, inv. č. 163, Kronika obecní školy ve Vys. Poli, 69.

⁴⁷SOkA Zlín, f. AO Nedašova Lhota, inv. č. 1, Pamětní kniha obce Nedašova Lhota, 128.

financial support for electrification, but villagers did much of the work themselves. Locals transported and installed utility poles, and housed and fed electrical workers.⁴⁸

During wartime, villagers appear to have generally succeeded in bribing the occupying authorities to turn a blind eye to their illegal economic activity: "It often happened towards the end of the war that officials would announce their visit to the village beforehand, and the representatives of the town, led by the mayor, would greet them with liquor, and when those inspectors were properly drunk, they would sign a statement with the mayor that the inspection of the village was without result and then, singing, they would return to Zlín in their cars."⁴⁹ Agricultural policies put in place under occupation continued after liberation, but local police officers were less susceptible to these ploys. Officers at the police station in Vlachovice appear to have devoted a significant amount of time to the enforcement of economic restrictions.⁵⁰ Rationing of basic goods remained in effect, and farmers were still required to sell a portion of their produce to the state. These predetermined agricultural quotas often went only partially fulfilled. Catastrophic droughts in the spring and summer of 1947 disrupted the harvest and forced farmers to sell their cattle at extremely low prices.⁵¹ The currency reform of 1945 was intended to reestablish economic order, but local observers complained that ordinary citizens' savings were wiped out, while those who had profited during the war continued their speculation.⁵²

⁴⁸SOkA Zlín, f. MNV Újezd, inv. č. 1, Obecní kronika 1924-1955, 89; SOkA Zlín, f. AO Nedašova Lhota, inv. č. 1, Pamětní kniha obce Nedašova Lhota, 132-133.

⁴⁹SOkA Zlín, f. MNV Újezd, inv. č. 1, Obecní kronika 1924-1955, 65; SOkA Zlín, f. AO Nedašova Lhota, inv. č. 1, Pamětní kniha obce Nedašova Lhota, 104.

⁵⁰See ABS, f. N 7, Okresní správa SNB Gottwaldov, Velitel'stvo stanice ZNB Vlachovice, inv. č. 112, Staniční služební kniha od roku 1947.

⁵¹SOkA Zlín, f. AO Nedašova Lhota, inv. č. 1, Pamětní kniha obce Nedašova Lhota, 106; SOkA Zlín, f. ObÚ Vysoké Pole, inv. č. 2, Pamětní kniha obce Vysoké Pole, 90; SOkA Zlín, f. AO Bratřejov, inv. č. 91/72, Pamětní kniha obce Bratřejova, 71.

⁵²SOkA Zlín, f. ObÚ Vysoké Pole, inv. č. 2, Pamětní kniha obce Vysoké Pole, 79-80.

The events of February 1948 in Prague had an immediate effect in Wallachia. All local committee members belonging to the National Social or People's Parties were forced from their positions by newly created local action committees. These institutions, established by government directive shortly after the coup, would "provide support to [local committees] and allow them to mobilize the people for the economic and political strength of the people's democracy," as a memorandum sent to all local officials in the Zlín district on February 29 explained.⁵³ Although some local officials were subsequently reinstated, action committees effected a transformation of public life. By monitoring local government and civic organizations, providing district and national officials with information about citizens' political reliability, and mobilizing the public through rallies, volunteer actions, and campaigns, these committees extended Communist power into the countryside.

State agricultural policy proved a source of dissatisfaction after February 1948. Farmers resented increased agricultural quotas and restrictions on the sale and slaughter of animals: "If a farmer didn't fulfill everything before the end of the year then he was pursued by members of the district committee, and if he still didn't listen then representatives of the regional committee pursued him as well. . . . A farmer couldn't sell any livestock unless he fulfilled his quotas one hundred percent."⁵⁴ Local committees and Communist functionaries provided informed district officials of their most and least productive suppliers of agricultural products. Those who chronically failed to fulfill their quotas would face the district committee at a meeting "to which members of the press [would be] invited," while diligent suppliers would be "accommodated in all possible ways." At a district meeting of local and district committee presidents and representatives of the Communist Party and Union of

⁵³SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-40, Újezd, "Spolupráce národních výborů s akčními výbory Národní fronty," 29 February 1948, unpaginated.

⁵⁴SOkA Zlín, f. ObÚ Vysoké Pole, inv. č. 2, Pamětní kniha obce Vysoké Pole, 98.

Agricultural Workers, officials resolved to forcibly buy the cows of farmers who did not fulfill their milk quotas and turn them over to those who had. In the most extreme cases, the non-fulfilling farmer's electricity would be turned off.⁵⁵ Circulars from the Central Action Committee in Prague and memoranda from regional and district action committees tasked local action committees with ensuring the proper purchase and distribution of agricultural commodities.⁵⁶ In Újezd, however, among the non-fulfillers [*neplničů*] were action committee members themselves.⁵⁷

The Act on Unified Agricultural Cooperatives, passed in March 1949, provided the legal framework for the collectivization of agriculture. While the fulfillment of agricultural quotas seems to have been a more pressing concern than collectivization in 1948 and 1949, and Unified Agricultural Cooperatives were not founded in many communities across the region until the late 1950s, district and regional authorities encouraged local officials to mobilize village populations for the establishment of collective farms.⁵⁸ While, according to

⁵⁵SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-40, Újezd, "Usnesení—konference předsedů MNV, AV, JSČZ, vyživovacích komisí a zástupců hospodářského družstva, předsedů místních organizací KSČ a za spoluúčasti částí členů rady a úředníků ONV."

⁵⁶SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-40, Újezd, Činnost akčních výborů NF č. 13, 6 May 1948, unpaginated; SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-40, Újezd, Činnost akčních výborů NF č. 13, 11 November 1948, unpaginated; SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-40, Újezd, Činnost akčních výborů NF č. 15, 12 December 1948, unpaginated; SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-5, Valašské Klobouky, Krajský akční výbor NF Valašsko-Slovácko, Plán práce pro rok 1949, 17 December 1949, unpaginated; SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-5, Valašské Klobouky, Pracovní plán OAV NF na III-IV čtvrtletí 1949, July 1949, unpaginated.

⁵⁷SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-39, Zápis o ustavující schůzi Místního národního výboru NF v Újezdě u Vizovic, 29 February 1948; SOkA Zlín, f. MNV Újezd, inv. č. 145, Povinné dodávky zemědělských výrobců, Soupis chovatelů krav, kteří neplnili dodávku mléka za rok 1949 na 100%.

⁵⁸SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-39, Memorandum to local action committees from Valašské Klobouky district action committee, 2 February 1949, unpaginated; SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-5, Valašské Klobouky, Pracovní plán OV ČSM na období květen-srpen, May 1949, unpaginated; SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-5, Valašské Klobouky, Pracovní plán na rok 1950, OAV-ČSL Valašské Klobouky, July 1949, unpaginated; SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-5, Valašské Klobouky, Kalendářní pracovní plán MAV-NF na IV. čtvrtletí, MAV-NF Drnovice, 21 September 1950, unpaginated; SOkA Zlín, f. Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-5, Valašské Klobouky, Zápis o schůzi MAV-NV ve Vys. Poli, MAV-NF Vysoké Pole, 21 October 1950, unpaginated; Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky, inv. č. B-232-5, Valašské Klobouky, Pracovní plán MAV-NF Lidečko na 3. čtvrtletí, MNV Lidečko, 15 June 1950, unpaginated.

the Vysoké Pole chronicle, some smaller farmers supported collectivization, “the true farmers... did not want to hear of it.” These farmers faced the greatest pressure from the government: “Big farmers who did not agree with all the government's directives were called village rich or kulaks.”⁵⁹

The Czechoslovak government's attempts to limit the role of the Catholic Church in public life also provoked resistance in Wallachia. In January 1949, a crowd in the village of Nedašov physically attacked an agent of State Security sent to question the popular local priest, František Půček. As Půček explained, tension had been rising in the village for months. Rumors spread that workers from nearby factories would be deployed to search homes for illegal stockpiles of food. Although Půček instructed his parishioners “to fulfill their civic responsibilities and render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, according to the words of Christ,” he also openly criticized the government's promotion of Alois Jirásek's historical novels with anti-Catholic themes.⁶⁰ Půček's parishioners feared that he would be arrested.⁶¹ When two agents appeared at the rectory, villagers from Nedašov and neighboring Nedašova Lhota prepared to defend him, dragging the agents outside and beating one of them. That night, police surrounded the village and rounded up its men, whom they brutally interrogated in the local schoolhouse. Twenty men were ultimately arrested and tried, including Půček.⁶²

Events such as those in Nedašov were used to justify further repressive measures. Wallachian priests, among them Vladimír Růčka, wrote to the regional authorities in protest of a ban on public religious meetings in April 1949. These measures, officials responded, did

⁵⁹SOkA Zlín, f. ObÚ Vysoké Pole, inv. č. 2, Pamětní kniha obce Vysoké Pole, 98.

⁶⁰ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-3208/Brno, Půček František a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Františkem Půčkem, 28 January 1949, 1.

⁶¹ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-3208/Brno, Půček František a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Františkem Fojtíkem, 28 January 1949, 1.

⁶²See Petr Káňa, “Události roku 1949 ve farnosti Nedašov - případ Půček a spol.,” (master's thesis, Palacký University, 2011).

not violate the Czechoslovak constitution's guarantee of religious freedom, because "in [this region], so-called religious exercises have been used repeatedly for the purpose of antistate activity. . . . It is without question that such cases threaten public peace and the people's democratic order."⁶³ Růčka was later imprisoned for insulting the newly instated local registrar, with whom he had quarreled over the introduction of civil marriage.⁶⁴

"In this year, there was a certain tension between local citizens and the political system," wrote Josef Valter, a teacher and keeper of the Nedašova Lhota chronicle, of 1949.⁶⁵ Valter was speaking specifically of the incident at the Nedašov rectory, and perhaps attempting to downplay its importance. But the tension he identified existed across the region. The political culture that had developed in Wallachia through occupation, war, and postwar partisan organizing came into direct conflict with the consolidating central state. By disregarding the needs and interests of Wallachian farmers and by disempowering the Wallachian partisans, many believed, the Czechoslovak state had betrayed those who had won its independence. Rumors about an imminent coup — or a civil war — were widespread.⁶⁶ In this atmosphere, former partisans prepared to reprise their roles as agents of national liberation.

⁶³ABS, f. N 7/1, Krajská správa MV Gottwaldov — správa VB, inv. č. 2, Zákaz vykonávania cirkevných cvičení a schôdzi mimo objektov kostolov, letter from Gottwaldov KNV to petitioners in Olomouc, Hošťálková, Slavičín, Lidečko, Valašské Klobouky, and Újezd u Vizovic, 22.

⁶⁴ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2161/Brno, Žitňák Josef a spol., podsv. 2., Zpráva církevního důvěrníka, 27 December 1949, 205; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2161/Brno, Žitňák Josef a spol., podsv. 2., Činnost faráře Růčky v Újezdě, 30 January 1950, 211; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2161/Brno, Žitňák Josef a spol., podsv. Vyšetřovacího spisu proti Josefu Žitňákovi a spol., č. 301/59, Trestní oznámení—Jan Pochylý a Vladimír Růčka, 13 January 1950, 133-134.

⁶⁵SOkA Zlín, f. AO Nedašova Lhota, inv. č. 1, Pamětní kniha obce Nedašova Lhota, 147.

⁶⁶See ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ludvíkem Šmotkem, 24 June 1949, 5; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Antonínem Kratinou, 6 July 1949, 2.

CHAPTER 3

In March 1948, a well-connected friend informed Josef Vávra-Stařík that a warrant had been issued for his arrest. Vávra-Stařík, the head of Partkol and leader of the Zlín branch of the Union of Czech Partisans, had emerged in 1945 as an ardent socialist and organizer in the postwar partisan political movement. His political career, however, was shrouded by accusations of collaboration with Nazi authorities and the falsification of his partisan record. As a schoolteacher in the village of Dubňany prior to the war, Josef Vávra had been a leading member of Národopisná Morava, a political association that emerged among ethnographers and folk artists in southeastern Moravia. Following the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, Vávra and his colleagues agitated for their region's annexation by the newly independent, Nazi-sponsored Slovak state. As the organization's leadership grew more explicitly collaborationist, he fell out of favor, ultimately losing both his position in Národopisná Morava and his job.⁶⁷ By 1943, Vávra had left for Slovakia, where he joined the growing partisan movement and adopted the nom de guerre Stařík. During the final months of the war, Vávra-Stařík returned to his native region with the First Partisan Brigade of Jan Žižka. The nature and extent of his involvement in the partisan struggle was a matter of controversy during the postwar period, with his rivals accusing him of embellishing his record.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ABS, f. MNB, Ministerstvo národní bezpečnosti, arch. č. 99, část 8, Josef Vávra-Stařík, 443 taj./1947, Vávra Josef, konfident—šetření, zpráva, 30 December 1948. See also Ivo Pejčoch, "Národopisná Morava." In *Fašismus v českých zemích, 1922-1945* (Prague: Academia, 2011): 251-263; František Mezihorák, *Hry o Moravu: Separatisté, iredentisté, a kolaboranti 1938-1945* (Prague: Mladá Fronta, 1997).

⁶⁸See ABS, f. 306, Druhý domácí odboj, sign. 68/6, 1. čs. partyzánská brigáda Jana Žižky, 35350-Kleg/5c odd. 1947, Vávra-Stařík—o činnost partyzánskou, 2 August 1947.

Despite his questionable past, Vávra-Stařík enjoyed considerable popularity among members of the partisan movement in eastern Moravia. As leader of the Zlín branch of the Union of Czech Partisans, he defended both regional and partisan interests.⁶⁹ Eastern Moravia's distance from centers of political power marginalized its partisans within the national movement. "We haven't had the time for hunting down sinecures like they do in Bohemia. Today we're beaten for everything and the Praguers have licked off all the cream," Vávra-Stařík wrote in 1947.⁷⁰ At a meeting of the Union of Czech Partisans held in Zlín that year, Vávra-Stařík complained that far more Bohemian than Moravian partisans and partisan groups had been officially recognized, though, as he claimed, the partisan movement had been far more active in eastern Moravia than anywhere in Bohemia. Other dissatisfied members followed Vávra-Stařík's lead, complaining that corrupt government officials continued to protect former collaborators and prevent partisans from claiming the power and recognition that was rightfully theirs.⁷¹ They drafted a memorandum to the Ministry of National Defense, demanding the recognition of partisan military ranks, increased educational opportunities and social welfare provisions for former partisans, and the enforcement of partisans' priority rights. The memorandum concluded with a warning: if the partisans' demands were not enacted within one week, they would take to the mountains in protest. "This was meant only academically, not practically, and not as a serious threat or an idea to take up arms," Vávra-Stařík explained. "It was emphasized in the memorandum that

⁶⁹ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světлана" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol sepsaný s Josefem Vávrou, 9 February 1950, 1.

⁷⁰ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světлана" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 3, Letter from Josef Vávra-Stařík, 9 January 1947, 210.

⁷¹ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světлана" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 3, Kč. j.: IM 535/10-65 kom., 5 April 1966, Opis B, 26 February 1947, 211-213.

we would go out unarmed.”⁷² Attending the meeting was an informant, who reported to the police that “Stařík-Vávra attempted through his speeches to create a spirit of division between Bohemian and Moravian partisans. All speakers conveyed that partisans today have less purpose and influence in public life than collaborators and traitors.”⁷³

Vávra-Stařík came into conflict with the partisan movement’s national leaders, including Augustin Schramm, who also served as the head of the partisan section of the Czechoslovak Communist Party.⁷⁴ After the coup of February 1948, the Communist Party sought to transform the partisan political movement into an instrument for consolidating its power. Vávra-Stařík resisted plans to merge the multiple existing postwar resistance organizations into the Union of National Revolution. Such an organization, he argued, would dilute partisans’ political influence.⁷⁵ In March 1948, Vávra-Stařík was purged from the Union of Czech Partisans. “I felt that I was beginning to lose my position,” he claimed. Within days, he and four of his former partisan comrades — Vilém Krajčírovič, Oldřich Kojecký, Oldřich Fischmeister, and Jan Hradil — fled to the US occupation zone of Germany.⁷⁶ After stays in refugee camps in Regensburg and Bad Orb, Vávra-Stařík settled in France.⁷⁷

⁷²See ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2671/Brno, Mapa osoby v prozatímní vazbě—Josef Vávra, Protokol sepsaný s Josefem Vávrou-Staříkem, 21 March 1947, 5.

⁷³ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlna” 1955-1958, podsv. č. 3, Kč. j.: IM 535/10-65 kom., 5 April 1966, Opis B, 26 February 1947, 213.

⁷⁴Šárka Rokosová, “Případ Miloslav Choc a spol.,” *Securitas Imperii* 12 (2005): 55.

⁷⁵ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlna” 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol sepsaný s Josefem Vávrou, 9 February 1950, 1; ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlna” 1955-1958, podsv. č. 4, Zpráva o průběhu vyslechu a dosavadních výsledcích v případě Josefa Vávry-Staříka, 14 February 1950, 2.

⁷⁶ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlna” 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Zápis o výpovědi — Josef Vávra, 25 July 1950, 1-2; ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlna” 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol sepsaný s Josefem Vávrou-Staříkem, 12 September 1950, 1-2.

⁷⁷ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlna” 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol sepsaný s Josefem Vávrou, 9 February 1950, 2. Aloisie Doležalová, Vávra-Stařík’s former secretary and the mother of his daughter Světlana, maintained that Vávra-Stařík told her before his departure that he was going

The socialist positions Vávra-Stařík espoused alienated him from the anti-Communist Czechoslovak emigré community.⁷⁸ He complained bitterly of leading emigré politicians' arrogance, accusing them of plotting to restore the power of wealthy landlords and industrialists, of wasting time with minor factional squabbles, and of disregarding the interests of ordinary Czechoslovaks both at home and in emigration. "They are fascist people," he wrote in a letter to a friend from the partisan movement. "With few exceptions, greed reigns here, and a desire to suffocate democracy at every point."⁷⁹ Most emigrants, Vávra-Stařík believed, did not accept the leadership of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia, founded in February 1949. He and his friends established a political group to promote and defend their own left-wing views. They named this group Světlana, after Vávra-Stařík's young daughter, whom he had left behind in Zlín.⁸⁰

Vávra-Stařík sought support for Světlana among his former associates in Moravia. This support, he hoped, would both strengthen his position within the Czechoslovak community in Paris and serve as a bulwark against the influence of reactionary emigre politicians in Czechoslovakia. He sent a copy of the group's program to his friend and associate Antonín Slabík, a former partisan living near Brno. Slabík apparently interpreted this letter as an instruction to establish a domestic section of Světlana. "At this time, even

abroad on orders of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. This statement, which she made on multiple occasions, has given rise to the theory that the Světlana network was a provocation from the start, a tool of the Communist regime to eliminate opposition among former partisans and sow terror among the population of eastern Moravia. With the exception of Doležalová's testimony, there is currently little evidence to support the theory that Světlana was established on the order of State Security. See ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, Zápis o výpovědi sepsané s Aloisii Doležalovou, 13 December 1955, 1; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 1, Zápis o výpovědi sepsané s Aloisii Doležalovou, 20 November 1964, 1-2.

⁷⁸ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol sepsaný s Josefem Vávrou, 9 February 1950, 2-3.

⁷⁹ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 4, Letter to Jarmila Kačerlová, 27 May 1949, 1-2; ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Zápis o výpovědi sepsaný zdějším velitelstvím s Josefem Vávrou-Staříkem, 23 October 1950, 3-4.

⁸⁰ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol sepsaný s Josefem Vávrou, 9 February 1950, 3-4.

though Světlana was just at its inception, it had already gotten out of my ideological control,” Vávra-Stařík said. He was unable to assert his authority over the resistance network that Slabík was building. He feared that Krajčírovič, with whom he frequently quarreled, was attempting to gain influence among former partisans in Moravia and usurp his rightful place as head of the movement.⁸¹

On April 27, 1948, Vávra-Stařík’s old partisan rival Augustin Schramm was murdered in his apartment. The prime suspect, Miloslav Choc, had recently returned from the Regensburg refugee camp, where he had associated with Vávra-Stařík and his friends. The Moravian partisans had joined with rightwing emigré politicians and US foreign intelligence in a conspiracy against the Czechoslovak state, prosecutors alleged. They had sent Choc to Prague to assassinate Schramm. On November 25, in one of Czechoslovakia’s first political trials, Vávra-Stařík and Krajčírovič were sentenced to death *in absentia*.⁸²

In October 1949, members of the Ploština branch of the Union of Czech Partisans met in a tavern in Vysoké Pole. Immediately after their leader, Rudolf Lenhard, convened the meeting and collected dues, the men began to complain. New houses had finally been built at Ploština for the families whose property had been destroyed in April 1945, but local authorities were preventing their owners from returning without a promise to join the Communist Party.⁸³ The Communist Party and the government were not fulfilling their obligations to the partisans, the men claimed. Some threatened to return their partisan legitimization cards to the Ministry of National Defense to protest their unfair treatment. They demanded that Lenhard explain what had happened to Vávra-Stařík. When he gamely

⁸¹Ibid., 3, 5, 8.

⁸²For a full account of the trial of Choc et al., see Šárka Rokosová, “Případ Miloslav Choc a spol.,” *Securitas Imperii* 12 (2005): 53-108.

⁸³ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlana” 1955-1958, podsv. č. 2, Protokol o výslechu—Josef Matůš, 25 January 1966, 4.

recounted the narrative presented in the press, the partisans began to laugh. Lenhard's friend Josef Matúš kicked him under the table, demanding the permission to speak. The government was spreading lies about Vávra-Stařík to discredit the partisan movement, Matúš declared.⁸⁴ "Let's just say it outright, this can't go on any longer," he added. "If you don't have a [Communist] star, there's nothing you can do."⁸⁵ The Communist seizure of power had exacerbated the partisans' grievances presented in Zlín two years earlier.

Rudolf Lenhard had recently been in contact with Vávra-Stařík. He had received the first letter from France in September: "[Vávra-Stařík] told me that he was doing well and asked me to come to Paris, saying that I'd do well, too."⁸⁶ While Lenhard declined the invitation to follow Vávra-Stařík into emigration, he continued to correspond with him secretly, with the assistance of Josef Matúš, a postal worker. "I told him that I'm not happy with the injustices that have been committed against the partisans, and that I'm not happy with the position of our government and the politics of the Communist Party," Lenhard recounted.⁸⁷

Although Lenhard was himself a party member and former activist, his devotion to the partisan movement had earned him the enmity of local functionaries. After the February coup, Lenhard intervened on behalf of his partisan comrades who had been purged from government and civic organizations: "I could only act according to my feelings," he said. "I didn't pay attention to political affiliation." Partisans, Lenhard believed, had earned their

⁸⁴ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Lenhard Rudolf a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Rudolfem Lenhardem, 25 May 1949, 6.

⁸⁵ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Světlana—operativní materiál VI/4, Úřední záznam 46/48, 1 December 1948, 21.

⁸⁶ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Lenhard Rudolf a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Rudolfem Lenhardem, 25 May 1949, 1.

⁸⁷Ibid., 3.

place in public life through their wartime efforts, regardless of their party membership. But the Communist Party treated the partisans in a “stepmotherly” fashion.⁸⁸

Like Vávra-Stařík, Lenhard saw himself and his partisan comrades as defenders of regional interests. He had taken a leading role in organizing relief for the survivors of Nazi retributive massacres.⁸⁹ Although Lenhard himself was an administrative worker living in Vsetín, his position in the Union of Czech Partisans gave him regular contact with the grievances of small farmers and villagers.⁹⁰ He was particularly incensed to hear that militia detachments from factories in Zlín and Vsetín had been sent to the Wallachian countryside to enforce the fulfillment of agricultural quotas. Lenhard resolved to send a delegation of partisans to the region’s parliamentary representatives “with the request that these measures be ended, given the efforts of the Wallachian people” under occupation, a plan that he mentioned at the October meeting in Vysoké Pole.⁹¹

Three days after the meeting, a State Security agent appeared at Lenhard’s apartment in Vsetín to question him. Lenhard realized that one of the members present had informed on him. “I became very angry at our circumstances and our whole political situation, which allows a person to be questioned for every little word. I saw this as terror and violence.”⁹² Shortly after the police left, two more unannounced visitors arrived at the apartment. Lenhard was afraid to open the door, but the men, Antonín Slabík and his friend Pravdík, assured him that they, too, were former partisans. They had come on orders of Vávra-Stařík to recruit him into a national resistance network. Lenhard was to establish a “troika,” an underground cell

⁸⁸Ibid., 2.

⁸⁹Ibid., 2.

⁹⁰Ibid., 1.

⁹¹Ibid., 3.

⁹²Ibid., 6.

of three members. “These troikas were supposed to spread through the broad mass of the country’s population, so that all patriots would rise up against terror and violence,” he explained. He selected his friend Matúš and roommate Ladislav Sýkora, informing them that he had been ordered by Vávra-Stařík to found and lead the Wallachian branch of a national resistance organization.⁹³

The men drew on the financial and organizational resources of the partisan movement to begin their resistance activity. They received a mimeograph machine from Vávra-Stařík’s former colleagues at Partkol and began distributing leaflets and seeking recruits.⁹⁴ Lenhard remained in contact with both Vávra-Stařík and Slabík, corresponding with invisible ink secured for the group by Sýkora, a chemist.⁹⁵ In January 1949, Matúš informed Lenhard that his mail had been tampered with, suggesting that he was being followed by the police. He left for southern Moravia, taking shelter at Slabík’s house outside Brno.⁹⁶ Together, Slabík and Lenhard drafted six leaflets, addressed to different segments of local society.⁹⁷ These leaflets, subsequently distributed across eastern Moravia, reveal the transformation of partisan political culture into an ideological framework for anti-Communist resistance.

Lenhard and Slabík’s leaflets extended local notions of *zásluhy* to the entire nation. The people of Czechoslovakia, they argued, had themselves won the right to self-government through their suffering and resistance under Nazi occupation. But the public, demoralized by war and politically and socially divided, had allowed “a few usurpers and opportunists,

⁹³Ibid., 6-8.

⁹⁴Ibid., 21, 25-26.

⁹⁵Ibid., 11.

⁹⁶Ibid., 29-30.

⁹⁷Ibid., 32.

placed by foreign interests... [to force] their will on our nation.”⁹⁸ The liberation of Czechoslovakia and the redemption of national honor required a renewal of national unity through common resistance to an illegitimate regime: “Let us come together, as we have always done in the most difficult times for our land and our nation, and let us overthrow those self-proclaimed lords of power, so that our nation might once again live in a truly free land and state,” they wrote in a leaflet addressed to the people of Moravia.⁹⁹ Former partisans played a special role in this struggle for liberation. The state’s persecution of the partisan movement demonstrated its betrayal of the nation: “The regime of today, which attempts to destroy your brotherhood, sealed in the blood of your fallen comrades, does not have honorable intentions for our nation.” The regime feared former partisans as representatives of legitimate power and bearers of *zásluhy*. The nation looked to former members of the resistance to unify it and lead it once again.¹⁰⁰

Lenhard and Slabík identified the Czechoslovak nation with the Wallachian village community. The regime was not building socialism for the people of Czechoslovakia, they argued, but rather serving the interests of a distant, non-national political elite. In one leaflet, Lenhard and Slabík suggested that the regime would allow expelled German and Hungarian Communists to return to Czechoslovak territory.¹⁰¹ In another, they wrote that the Communists had sacrificed national freedom to an “inhuman teaching, which is called socialism and communism, but which remains a tool of the dishonorable teachings of

⁹⁸ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Dokumenty z akce Světlana, “Narode český a slovenský!”, January 1949, 14.

⁹⁹ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Dokumenty z akce Světlana, “Občané—Moravané!”, January 1949, 16.

¹⁰⁰ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Dokumenty z akce Světlana, “Legionáři, partyzáni, zahraniční vojáci, osv. političtí vězni a ostatní odbojoví pracovníci!”, 13.

¹⁰¹ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Dokumenty z akce Světlana, “Legionáři, partyzáni, zahraniční vojáci, osv. političtí vězni a ostatní odbojoví pracovníci!”, 13; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Dokumenty z akce Světlana, “Lidé československý!”, 14.

Zionism and Talmud.”¹⁰² Socialism would be maintained in a free Czechoslovakia, but it would not be imposed on the people from above: “We will build socialism ourselves... so that it will correspond to our possibilities and the mentality of our highly cultured people.”¹⁰³

Evoking memories of war and occupation, these leaflets suggested that the Communist regime was illegitimate and doomed to destruction. One, addressed to police officers and agents of State Security, reminded its recipients of the frailty of political orders in Czechoslovakia. Many officers of the law, it pointed out, had now served under three different regimes. Their allegiance should be not to illegitimate state authorities but to the legitimate power held by the nation. This power was something “much stronger than your whole crazed police apparatus, whose purpose is to maintain the power of the usurpers at all cost.” Soon, those who behaved against the nation's interests would be brought to justice. “We are watching your actions at every step, we are making a record of them, and it is not long before you will come before the strict court of the people.”¹⁰⁴

Liberation was imminent, Lenhard and Slabík declared. While their leaflets did not explain how this liberation would be achieved, they encouraged Czechoslovaks to behave as if the regime's days were numbered. They urged the public to form secret political groups, to record the actions of unscrupulous officials, to take independent action against “national

¹⁰²ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Dokumenty z akce Světlan, “Občané—Moravané!”, January 1949, 16. A leaflet addressing members of the working class contains similar antisemitic rhetoric. See ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Dokumenty z akce Světlan, “Dělníci a zaměstnanci znarodněného i soukromého průmyslu!”, January 1949, 16. This supports Kevin McDermott's finding of widespread antisemitism in postwar Czech society. As McDermott demonstrates, official propaganda drew on popular antisemitism to solidify national unity and mobilize support for the regime, but antisemitic symbols and discourses could also be used to express anti-government or anti-Communist sentiment. See Kevin McDermott, “A ‘Polyphony of Voices’? Czech Popular Opinion and the Slánský Affair,” *Slavic Review* 67, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 840-865.

¹⁰³ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Dokumenty z akce Světlan, “Narode český a slovenský!”, January 1949, 14.

¹⁰⁴ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Dokumenty z akce Světlan, “Všem příslušníkům SNB, STB a ostatním policejním orgánům,” January 1949, 14.

parasites,” and not to fear retribution from the authorities.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps more important than the leaflets’ content was their symbolic value. These leaflets both challenged the regime’s authority and power, demonstrating the continued existence of an alternative political culture. Their message created an oppositional, revolutionary community identified as the true representative of the Czechoslovak nation. “We stand with you and we are holding a protective hand above you. There are thousands of us . . . We are everywhere and nowhere!” proclaimed one leaflet.

Police noted these leaflets throughout eastern Moravia in early 1949: in Vsetín, Valašské Klobouky, Hodonín, Zlín, Kroměříž, and in a train traveling from Brno to Bylnice.¹⁰⁶ Lenhard and Slabík entrusted Josef Matúš with the leaflets’ distribution in Wallachia, and Lenhard himself had a number of leaflets sent to his former partisan comrades across the country.

In January 1949, Alois Šimara received a large envelope at his home in the town of Hanušovice, containing around twenty-five leaflets of two different kinds, addressed to the military and another to factory workers, urging both populations to resist the governing regime. Šimara was presented with a dilemma: should he hand these fliers over to the police or circulate them, as the enclosed letter instructed? He turned to his friends Antonín Kratina, Ludvík Šmotek, and Štěpán Novák for advice.¹⁰⁷ These young men, most of whom, like

¹⁰⁵ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Dokumenty a akce Světlana, “Občané—Moravané!”, January 1949, 16

¹⁰⁶ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Světlana—operativní materiál VI/4, Úřední záznam 84/49, 29 January 1949, 105; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Světlana—operativní materiál VI/4, Oblastní úřadovna státní bezpečnosti Uh. Hradiště, c.j. 12152/1949-II-Ši, 1 March 1949, 116; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Světlana—operativní materiál VI/4, Oblastní úřadovna státní bezpečnosti Uh. Hradiště, c.j. 12152/1949-II-Ši, 4 March 1949, 123; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Světlana—operativní materiál VI/4, Oblastní úřadovna státní bezpečnosti Uh. Hradiště, c.j. 12152/1949-II-Ši, 3 March 1949, 124; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Světlana—operativní materiál VI/4, Pobočka oblastní úřadovny státní bezpečnosti ve Zlíně, č.j. 9862/49-II-Dk, 2 January 1949, 176; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Světlana—operativní materiál VI/4, Oblastní úřadovna státní bezpečnosti Uh. Hradiště, c.j. 11749/1949-II-Ši, 4 March 1949, 122.

¹⁰⁷ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 1-3.

Šimara, were former partisans, natives of Wallachia, and members of the Communist Party, were deeply dissatisfied. They had been promised a reward for their wartime service and honest efforts to rebuild the country, but—as they saw it—while they toiled, unscrupulous individuals abused their positions in the party and state to accumulate wealth for themselves.¹⁰⁸ The leaflets confirmed that the rumors they had heard were true: “Something is being prepared and something is going to happen, the power in our country will have to be overthrown,” Kratina told Šimara.¹⁰⁹ While the envelope Šimara received had been postmarked in Brno, the men speculated that the leaflets must have originated in Wallachia, the partisans’ terrain, and that Lenhard and Matúš might be involved in their distribution.¹¹⁰ Šimara’s father reported that similar leaflets had been found in Lidečko, his native village.¹¹¹

After an unsuccessful trip to Wallachia to inquire after Lenhard, who was nowhere to be found, Šmotek received a package from Brno containing more leaflets, copies of an oath of induction, and a brief, handwritten letter naming him leader of Světlana-Jeseník — the designation for Světlana in northern Moravia. Šmotek was to circulate the enclosed material, recruit new members of the group, and “not search for the origin [of the package]—it isn’t healthy.”¹¹² The men decided not to follow these instructions. As new settlers, they lacked the

¹⁰⁸ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ludvíkem Šmotkem, 27 June 1949, 5; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ludvíkem Šmotkem, 4 June 1949, 2, 12-13.

¹⁰⁹ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 3.

¹¹⁰ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 3; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ludvíkem Šmotkem, 4 June 1949, 1-2; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Antonínem Kratinou, 6 July 1949, 1-2.

¹¹¹ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 5.

¹¹²ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ludvíkem Šmotkem, 4 June 1949, 5. See ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Lenhard Rudolf a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Rudolfem Lenhardem, 25 May 1949, 39.

necessary social connections to build a resistance network in the borderlands.¹¹³ They were increasingly convinced that a revolution was imminent: Lenhard's associate, Ladislav Sýkora, had told Šmotek that it would occur that May. It was only a matter of time, they felt, before they would be called upon to take up arms — perhaps by Lenhard or Matúš, or by someone even more important than their old partisan comrades.¹¹⁴ They would help to overthrow this government as they had overthrown German rule: not by organizing clandestinely and distributing leaflets in the unfamiliar environment of the borderlands, but by fighting in the hills and valleys of Wallachia. On Šimara's suggestion, they each began searching for weapons.¹¹⁵

On April 21, Šimara appeared at Antonín Kratina's house unannounced. He had just escaped from the police, he declared. They now had no choice but to flee underground.¹¹⁶ Šimara, Kratina, Šmotek, Novák, and another friend, Alois Valenta, took a train to Lidečko that evening. The men planned to find Lenhard or Matúš, who they hoped would officially

¹¹³ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 6.

¹¹⁴ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ludvíkem Šmotkem, 27 June 1949, 5; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 4.

¹¹⁵ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 6.

¹¹⁶During his initial interrogation, Šimara reported that he and his friends had simply decided to leave for Wallachia. Later, his story changed: he and a friend, he said, began fighting while attempting to rape an unknown woman in the forest. After beating both the woman and his friend, Šimara fled. Šimara's other comrades reported that he had recounted to them a story involving a friend who lured him into an unknown apartment, where a strange woman plied him with alcohol. Suddenly, two police officers burst through the door and attempted to arrest him, but he tore away. Štěpán Novák — the only man among Šimara's associates who was neither a native of Wallachia nor a former partisan — broke with the group shortly after their arrival in Lidečko. Upon his return to northern Moravia, Novák heard from locals that Šimara had fled "because he had raped some woman, and then beaten her." See ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Předběžný protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 2 June 1949, 2; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 7-8; 2; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Antonínem Kratinou, 6 July 1949, 2, 5-6; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ludvíkem Šmotkem, 27 June 1949, 9-10; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Zápis o výpovědi s podezřelým Novákem Štěpánem, 26 January 1950, 9-10.

induct them into the armed resistance. Over the following weeks, they used their contacts in the partisan movement to find food, shelter, and weapons. They initially stayed with the farmer František Ptáček in the nearby village of Tichov, where locals reported having recently been in contact with Josef Matuší.¹¹⁷ Antonín Kratina asked Šimara for permission to visit his native village of Pozdřechov, where a festival was planned for Sunday, April 24. The group would travel together, Šimara insisted.¹¹⁸

Early Sunday morning, the men arrived at the house of Jaroslav Kratina, Antonín's uncle. According to the elder Kratina, Šimara asked to buy one of his horses. When he refused, Šimara pulled a pistol from his pocket and ordered Kratina to raise his hands. Kratina began to laugh: "I recognized my brother's son among these men and I didn't believe that they'd shoot me," he explained later. "Then they put their pistols back in their pockets." Antonín Kratina informed his uncle that he and his friends had gone underground "like during the Protectorate." Jaroslav Kratina invited them in, offering them bread and bacon. Šimara demanded to speak with Kratina's neighbor, Josef Prýšť, a former partisan.¹¹⁹ When Prýšť arrived, Šimara announced that he and his friends had returned to the hills to take up the partisan struggle. "You don't have to worry," added Antonín Kratina. "The army is behind us. The hills are full of partisans."

"I haven't seen any partisans here," replied Prýšť.

¹¹⁷ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, iV-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 9; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Antonínem Kratinou, 6 July 1949, 7; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Timofejem Simulenkou, 1 August 1949, 3-5; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Františkem Ptáčkem, 18 August 1949, 4-5; ABS, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Jiřím Vařákem, 22 August 1949, 1-2.

¹¹⁸ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Antonínem Kratinou, 6 July 1949, 8.

¹¹⁹ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Zápis o výpovědi s podezřelým Kratinou Jaroslavem, 18 September 1949, 1.

“You should go to Slovakia, then. You’ll see them there,” said Šimara.

“Well, don’t let it be like during the occupation, with innocent people getting murdered,” said Prýšť. “If you want to do something, you should give some Communist functionaries a thrashing.” He mentioned a number of unpopular local officials, including the local party leader, František Pavlan, against whom he had a personal grudge. Prýšť was himself an old Communist, having joined the party as a young worker in Bratislava in the year of its founding, 1921. In 1945, he helped establish the Communist Party in his native village of Pozděchov. One year later, however, he was expelled, apparently because of a personal dispute with Pavlan, whom Prýšť described as a former member of the right-wing Agrarian Party.¹²⁰

The festival in Pozděchov offered Šimara and his men a perfect opportunity to carry out their first resistance action. Their presence at the festival attracted little suspicion. Farmers and villagers from far and wide, railway workers from a nearby labor encampment, and locals resettled in the borderlands all came to Pozděchov that night to drink and dance.¹²¹ In a tavern later that night, Šimara and Antonín Kratina fell into conversation with Jaroslav Novosad, a young villager whom they both knew. “That’s the chairman,” Novosad said. Pavlan had tried to send him to the mines in Ostrava, he explained. “He’s a real swine. He deserves a beating.”

“Don’t worry,” said Šimara. “We’ll give him a beating.”¹²²

¹²⁰ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Zápis o výpovědi s podezřelým Prýštěm Josefem, 14 September 1949, 1-2.

¹²¹ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ludvíkem Šmotkem, 27 June 1949, 13.

¹²² ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Zápis o výpovědi s podezřelým Novosadem Jaroslavem, 19 September 1949, 2; ABS, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 11; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Antonínem Kratinou, 6 July 1949, 10.

After speaking with Novosad, Šimara and Kratina headed toward the front of the building to look for Pavlan, where they met Valenta and Šmotek. According to Kratina, Šimara forced the chairman against the wall. “Should I shoot him?” he asked.¹²³ As Pavlan recalled, Kratina urged the men to let him go. As the chairman fled, he heard a gunshot.¹²⁴

Jaroslav Kratina, who was standing inside the tavern at the bar, looked down to see his leg bleeding.¹²⁵ He had been shot in the right leg just above the knee.¹²⁶ Kratina spoke to the police the following day. “I haven’t had any problems with anyone, and I don’t know who would want to shoot me,” he declared. “I don’t know anything about an argument or misunderstanding that might have happened.”¹²⁷

A week later, Novosad met the men in the hills above the village, where he suggested that they confront the head teacher at the local school. This man, Novosad explained, had denounced one of his colleagues, resulting in the man’s arrest. The head teacher had then taken his colleague’s property.¹²⁸ After Šimara and his companions discussed whether to merely return the stolen property to the family of its rightful owner, or to seize all the head

¹²³ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 11; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Antonínem Kratinou, 6 July 1949, 9; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ludvíkem Šmotkem, 27 June 1949, 14.

¹²⁴ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Františkem Pavlanem, 25 April 1949.

¹²⁵ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Světlana—operativní materiál VI/1, Protokol sepsaný s Jaroslavem Kratinou, 25 April 1949.

¹²⁶ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s podezřelým Jaroslavem Kratinou, 18 September 1949, 2.

¹²⁷ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Světlana—operativní materiál VI/1, Protokol sepsaný s Jaroslavem Kratinou, 25 April 1949.

¹²⁸ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ludvíkem Šmotkem, 27 June 1949, 18; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Antonínem Kratinou, 6 July 1949, 19; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Zápis o výpovědi s podezřelým Novosadem Jaroslavem, 19 September 1949, 3.

teacher's belongings "as was done during the war," Novosad led them to the head teacher's house.¹²⁹ The teacher refused to open his door to them, and the men ultimately decided against forcing their way inside: "That would have made too much noise, and we had already made a lot of noise banging on the door, so I commanded the group to stop," Šimara explained.¹³⁰

Šimara related similar requests from locals in the village of Nedašov.¹³¹ After the incident at the Nedašov rectory that winter, twenty-one year old Josef Fojtík fled to the woods to avoid the police. He later joined up with Šimara's group.¹³² According to Šimara, Fojtík suggested the group take revenge on two policemen "who had behaved very badly during some incident in Nedašov . . . [who] apparently treated people roughly and tortured people in custody."¹³³ The farmers with whom the group was staying, Šimara said,

¹²⁹ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 20; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Timofějem Simulenkou, 1 August 1949, 15.

¹³⁰ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 21.

¹³¹ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 26-27; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Timofějem Simulenkou, 1 August 1949, 19.

¹³²ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Josefem Fojtíkem, 27 June 1949, 2, 6. Josef Fojtík maintained that he had not been in Nedašov during the incident.

¹³³ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 26; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Předběžný protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 2 June 1949, 6. Unlike Prýštl and Novosad, however, the Nedašov men firmly denied inciting Šimara's group to violence against local functionaries. ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Dodatek k protokolu sepsaného s Josefem Fojtíkem, 29 June 1949, 4; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Vincencem Kozubíkem, 3 August 1949, 3; See also ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Zápis o výpovědi s podezřelým Janem Fojtíkem, 20 September 1949, 3. Rudolf Lenhard also reported that his contacts from the area advocated shooting or hanging these policemen. Lenhard, who knew one of them personally, instead suggested that they might kidnap these policemen and allow their victims to "pay them back for at least some of the beating" before releasing them. ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Lenhard Rudolf a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Rudolfem Lenhardem, 25 May 1949, 42.

“continually instigat[ed] us to do something about the local Communist Party functionaries . . . that it was necessary to bring them to heel, best of all would be to hang them.”¹³⁴

As Šimara explained, however, the group could no longer act independently. They had failed in their search for Lenhard and Matúš, but they had found what they thought to be an even more promising connection to a movement for armed resistance. While still in Tichov, they were approached by a young man named Josef Tomeček, who told Šimara that he was directly connected to an agent of French intelligence. This man, known to them only as Hery, had commanded Tomeček to bring Šimara’s men to Nedašov.¹³⁵ At their first meeting, Hery explained that he had been sent from Paris to organize an underground resistance movement against the Czechoslovak regime. To gain Šimara’s trust, he brought with him Aloisie Doležalová, a former administrator at Partkol and the mother of Vávra-Stařík’s daughter Světlana.¹³⁶ He forbade Šimara from taking any further actions against local Communist functionaries. Rather, they were to prepare for departure for the West, where they would undergo military training.¹³⁷ They might return to Czechoslovakia as parachutists and

¹³⁴ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 25; see also ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Timofejem Simulenkou, 1 August 1949, 19.

¹³⁵ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 22-23; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Josefem Tomečkem, 12 July 1949, 2-4.

¹³⁶ Tureček had also posed as a French agent to Doležalová, offering her assistance in escaping across the border. Doležalová feared arrest because of her association with Vávra-Stařík. See ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlana” 1955-1958, podsvazek č. I, Zápis o výpovědi—Jaroslav Tureček, 10 November 1955, 2; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlana” 1955-1958, Zápis o výpovědi sepsané s Aloisií Doležalovou, 13 December 1955, 2-5; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlana” 1955-1958, č.j. M-001138/56, Zpráva generálnímu tajemníkovi o případu “Světlana,” 26 April 1956, 2, 4-5; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlana” 1955-1958, podsv. č. 1, Zápis o výpovědi sepsané s Aloisií Doležalovou, 20 November 1964, 5-6.

¹³⁷ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 26.

participate in the liberation of their country. Or, he suggested, they might remain abroad to work.¹³⁸

The French intelligence agent Hery was in fact the State Security agent Jaroslav Tureček.¹³⁹ State Security had been well aware of the actions of Šimara's group since the incident in Pozdřechov, relying on a number of well-placed local informers.¹⁴⁰ After multiple unsuccessful attempts to infiltrate the group, Tureček succeeded in gaining the confidence of Josef Tomeček, who saw in the agent's promises the opportunity to escape a difficult family life for work in the United States, where he had a relative.¹⁴¹

With Tureček's encouragement, Šimara's group set about recruiting local men interested in emigration. These new recruits had motivations and intentions distinctly different from those of the partisans that formed the core of Šimara's group. Having spent four months hiding from police in the hills above Nedašov, Josef Fojtík accepted Šimara's offer to escape abroad. He never planned to join a foreign army, he claimed. Like Tomeček, Fojtík wanted to join his uncle in the United States.¹⁴² Hery sent him to recruit Antonín Martinka, who had also gone into hiding after the police sought to question him for publicly

¹³⁸See ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlna" 1955-1958, podsvazek č. I, Zápis o výpovědi—Jaroslav Tureček, 10 November 1955, 6.

¹³⁹ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlna" 1955-1958, Zápis o výpovědi—Jaroslav Tureček, 10 November 1955, 1-2, 6; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlna" 1955-1958, Zpráva o prošetření případu Aloisie Doležalové, 27 January 1956, 11. Tureček's alias is alternately given as Hery, Harry, or Henry, and he also operated under the name Jindra Tabara.

¹⁴⁰ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Světlna—operativní materiál VI/1, Útvar 522/1 A — Č.j. 5435/010-49, 9 April 1949, 39-41; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Světlna—operativní materiál VI/1, Útvar 522/1 A—Č.j. 5298/010-49, 28 April 1949, 47-48; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Světlna—operativní materiál VI/1, Útvar 522/1 A — Č.j. 5435/010-49, 5 May 1949, 39-41.

¹⁴¹ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, inv. č. V-2670/Brno, Světlna—operativní materiál VI/1, Útvar 522/1 A—Č.j. 4338/010-49, 5 April 1949, 51-52; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlna (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., 12 July 1949, 2; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlna" 1955-1958, Zpráva o prošetření případu Aloisie Doležalové, 27 January 1956, 11; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce "Světlna" 1955-1958, podsvazek č. III, Zápis o výpovědi—Jaroslav Tureček, 18 December 1955, 3, 6.

¹⁴²ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlna (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Josefem Fojtíkem, 27 June 1949, 10.

insulting Prime Minister Zápotocký. Martinka was grateful for the chance to come out from underground: “This hiding is not much fun, I’m hungry and cold,” he complained.¹⁴³ Also recruited was Ladislav Pacík, a friend of Tomeček’s, and their acquaintance František Fojtík.¹⁴⁴

These new recruits were all young men from poor farming families. The oldest, Tomeček, was twenty-six, while the youngest, Martinka, was twenty. None had been active in the partisan movement or the Communist Party. They all attributed their actions to naivety or coercion: “First I didn’t want to go [abroad] . . . but Tomeček said that I had been seen bringing the partisans food, so I decided to go abroad with them,” Pacík said.¹⁴⁵ Martinka claimed that he was bound by an oath he had signed to follow all his leader’s commands under penalty of death.¹⁴⁶ Tomeček said that he “didn’t know why he actually did this,” suggesting that he had simply acted out of loyalty to the cousin who had introduced him to Hery.¹⁴⁷ František Fojtík stated that he had not even intended to go abroad at all. He had won a trip to a recreational facility in Bohemia, and his friend Pacík offered to give him a ride. After meeting the armed men, Fojtík was too intimidated to refuse.¹⁴⁸ Their political attitudes may have reflected the grievances that were widespread in the region: “I was never interested

¹⁴³ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Antonínem Martinkou, 11 July 1949, 2, 11.

¹⁴⁴ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ladislavem Pacíkem, 18 July 1949, 2; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Františkem Fojtíkem, 30 June 1949, 2. There is no indication that Josef Fojtík and František Fojtík were closely related.

¹⁴⁵ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Ladislavem Pacíkem, 4.

¹⁴⁶ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Antonínem Martinkou, 11 July 1949, 7, 16.

¹⁴⁷ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Josefem Tomečkem, 12 July 1949, 14.

¹⁴⁸ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Františkem Fojtíkem, 30 June 1949, 4.

in politics... but I concluded that this regime can't be the right one when so many people are unhappy with it," said Martinka.¹⁴⁹

Šimara arranged to have the men picked up on a dark road between the villages of Lužná and Lidečko on the night of May 30, 1949. They would be transported, they believed, to the French-occupied zone of Austria, and thence to France.¹⁵⁰ Instead, they were taken to a forest outside Jihlava, where their drivers lured them out of their vehicles, offering them the opportunity to change into new clothes.¹⁵¹ Immediately, the men were surrounded by police and arrested "with drastic physical violence," as an investigation years later determined.¹⁵² Josef Fojtík's interrogator noted that the young man kept repeating, "We were all set up!" After all, Fojtík said, the drivers who were meant to ferry them to safety had themselves participated in their arrest. "Even an idiot has to realize how it really is!" he exclaimed.¹⁵³

Šimara and his companions had survived underground for over a month. They mobilized wartime partisan networks, as well as their family and village connections, to provide them with food, shelter, and weapons, to pass on messages, and to protect them from police and government authorities. While they feared and attempted to avoid the police, they did not attempt to hide from village society. They openly appeared in the streets in Pozdřechov, Nedašov, and Vysoké Pole, visited pubs, and met associates at train stations.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Antonínem Martinkou, 11 July 1949, 2.

¹⁵⁰ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 34.

¹⁵¹Ibid., 36.

¹⁵²ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, podsv. I, Akce "Světlana" 1955-1958, II/a Pz 244/64, Zpráva o prověřování stížností osob, odsouzených pro činnost v protistátní organizaci "SVĚTLANA," 8 June 1965, 9.

¹⁵³ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Výpis z protokolu sepsaného s Josefem Fojtíkem, 28 June 1949, 10.

¹⁵⁴See ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 17, 21, 24-25.

Šimara's father, a "dyed-in-the-wool Communist," knew of his son's return and of his intention to join an armed revolutionary group.¹⁵⁵ Timofej Simulenko, who joined the group after its arrival in Wallachia, at one point took leave of his companions to see if he had received permission from the district committee to build a new house.¹⁵⁶

The farmers and villagers accused of assisting Šimara's group insisted to their police interrogators that their motivations for doing so were personal rather than political. Many of them admitted that they were aware of the group's revolutionary aims, but did not share them: "I didn't agree with their program to overthrow the government, because . . . I was convinced that whatever regime is or will be, it won't help me at all," said František Ptáček. Rather, Ptáček allowed the men to shelter with him out of obligation to his brother-in-law Simulenko.¹⁵⁷ Josef Hrabina declared that while he suspected Šimara and his associates were engaged in "something against the state," he would not inform on his friend.¹⁵⁸

Some of those accused of assisting Šimara's group claimed that their cooperation was coerced. Jiří Vařák asked Šimara not to return to his farm, because his presence put him at risk of denunciation and arrest. "We have to shut the people's mouths," Šimara reportedly responded, suggesting that he would carry out executions of villagers to spread fear of partisan retribution. After this comment, Vařák said, he was too frightened to refuse their demands.¹⁵⁹ Ptáček had not been directly threatened, but he suggested that his circumstances made him particularly vulnerable to revenge: "Consider it yourself, a hill farmer living in a

¹⁵⁵ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 5, 8.

¹⁵⁶ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Timofejem Simulenkem, 1 August 1949, 9.

¹⁵⁷ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Františkem Ptáčkem, 18 August 1949, 15.

¹⁵⁸ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Zápis o výpovědi s Hrabinou Josefem, 22 September 1949, 2.

¹⁵⁹ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Jiřím Vařákem, 22 July 1949, 3-4.

remote area, as I am, has to keep in mind the safety of himself and his family.”¹⁶⁰ Despite Šimara’s initial threats, Jaroslav Kratina sheltered the men not out of fear, but out of obligation to his nephew. When interviewed by police about his injury, however, he was too frightened to reveal all he knew. Šimara, he said, had sworn him to silence.¹⁶¹ An anonymous letter, sent to the police in May 1949, substantiates the farmers’ claims of coercion: “There are armed bands in the area of Ploština who go around at night extorting people for food . . . and saying that if anyone rats on them they will come and shoot them or burn them down. . . . Please take action quickly against these people before something bad happens to anyone, they have grenades and automatic weapons, we will thank you for getting rid of them, we ask for quick action.”¹⁶²

Šimara and his friends had appeared to Kratina, Ptáček, and Vařák not as representatives of an international antistate conspiracy, but as friends, fellow villagers, and partisan comrades. In the borderlands, they had been alone, but in Wallachia, they were enmeshed in a web of mutual obligation. The would-be resistance fighters exploited these social ties to survive underground and prepare for battle. Villagers such as Novosad and Prýšť took advantage of the aspirations of Šimara’s men to avenge officials who betrayed their own interests and those of the village community: “There are some Communist functionaries in Pozděchov who are not popular among the people... it would be necessary to subdue them,” Šimara recalled Prýšť telling him.¹⁶³ The Pozděchov officials’ treatment of

¹⁶⁰ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVB, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Františkem Ptáčkem, 18 August 1949, 15.

¹⁶¹ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s podezřelým Jaroslavem Kratinou, 18 September 1949, 2.

¹⁶²ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Světlana—operativní materiál VI/1, anonymous letter, 9 May 1949, 43.

¹⁶³See ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2671/Brno, arch. č. 95/-IVA, Světlana (IV)—Šimara Alois a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Aloisem Šimarou, 22 June 1949, 10.

Josef Prýšť, a former partisan and old Communist, violated the ethic of *zásluhy* that had developed in this region during and after the Second World War. While the Czechoslovak state understood the group's schemes against unpopular Communist functionaries to provide evidence for a widespread antistate conspiracy directed by Western intelligence, they instead reveal specifically local dynamics of grievance and solidarity, rooted in a commonly-shared political culture.

Police feared that Šimara and his men might spark the common resistance that Lenhard and Slabík called for in their leaflets. Two agents sent on Šimara's trail in early May nervously noted that in Tichov, "all members of the public who came into contact with our people, assuming that they were partisans, greeted them heartily and offered them provisions."¹⁶⁴ These agents were unable to infiltrate the group simply by posing as partisans. Jaroslav Tureček, himself a former partisan, succeeded where they had failed. Unwittingly assisted by Josef Tomeček and Aloisie Doležalová, Tureček created a mechanism for turning local resistance, dissent, and simple dissatisfaction into conspiracy. This conspiracy was recognizable to both former partisans, who saw it as a renewal of their wartime efforts, and to agents of state repression, for whom it represented the danger posed by their ideological and political enemies.

Both agents of the state and of antistate resistance were deeply embedded in village society. While Novosad looked to the partisans to restore justice in Pozdřechov by returning the imprisoned teacher's possessions to his wife, the writer of the anonymous letter sought state protection from extortion by Šimara's men. Šimara and his men depended on, and often coerced, the cooperation of local farmers such as František Ptáček and Jiří Vařák. State Security, for its part, also relied on local informers—willing and unwilling, aware and

¹⁶⁴ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Světlana—operativní materiál VI/1, Útvar 522/1 A—Č.j. 4338/010-49, 5 April 1949, 51-52.

unaware. The case of Šimara and his band reveals the intense contestation of power in postwar Czechoslovakia at the local level and the social and political framework in which this contestation took place. The fate of the Světlana network—of Šimara, Lenhard, and Vávra-Stařík, and of those who worked with them—demonstrate the power of state repression.

In the spring of 1950, Rudolf Lenhard and his twenty-three co-defendants stood trial in Zlín, recently renamed Gottwaldov after the first Communist president of Czechoslovakia. Following his flight to southern Moravia the previous year, Lenhard had hoped to join Vávra-Stařík in France. Like Šimara and his men, he was arrested after making contact with an agent of State Security who offered to convey him safely across the border.¹⁶⁵ Lenhard, who had long suffered from tuberculosis, became gravely ill in prison. From his hospital bed, he attempted to send a letter to Rudolf Slánský, asking the general secretary of the Communist Party to intervene on behalf of himself and his imprisoned partisan comrades. “I expected that if Slánský received this letter, he might ease our situation because he knew me well from my activities with regard to the destroyed settlement of Ploština,” Lenhard explained.¹⁶⁶

His trial was held in the Great Cinema, one of the largest theaters in the country. “Lenhard is a very intelligent, very egotistical careerist,” declared the state prosecutor, explaining that he had, on Vávra-Stařík’s orders, cleverly manipulated the public to establish a mass conspiratorial organization seeking to violently overthrow the “popular democratic order.”¹⁶⁷ Among Lenhard’s co-defendants was Karel Schich, a former partisan whom

¹⁶⁵ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Lenhard Rudolf a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Rudolfem Lenhardem, 25 May 1949, 59-60; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlana” 1955-1958, č.j. IM-085/55, Záznam, 17 January 1956, 15; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlana” 1955-1958, č.j. M-001138/56, Zpráva generálnímu tajemníkovi o případu “Světlana,” 26 April 1956, 2; ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlana” 1955-1958, podsv. č. 3, Protokol o výslechu—Bedřich Doubek, 1 June 1966, 1-2.

¹⁶⁶ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Světlana—operativní materiál VI/5, Zápis o výpovědi—Rudolf Lenhard, 13 December 1949, 123. Rudolf Slánský had been the leader of the Union of Czech Partisans.

¹⁶⁷ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Lenhard Rudolf a spol., Trestní oznámení, 21 September 1949, 66.

Lenhard had defended in February 1948 after he was targeted by the Valašské Klobouky action committee.¹⁶⁸ Schich received a sentence of ten years for giving Lenhard one thousand crowns and coupons for gasoline.¹⁶⁹ Lenhard himself was sentenced to death.¹⁷⁰ Two months later, his appeal was denied. Lenhard's participation in partisan resistance, the judge ruled, did not mitigate his guilt: "The appellant invalidated his efforts [*zásluhy*] in the fight against the occupiers through the total transformation of his position toward the state and working people, as he utterly betrayed the ideals toward whose realization he had previously worked . . . The appellant is an irreconcilable enemy of the republic."¹⁷¹ On October 24, 1950, Lenhard was hanged in Uherské Hradiště.

"The cause of so much unhappiness in our village was the leader of the antistate group Světlana-Jeseník, the tobacconist from Hanušovice Alois Šimara," wrote the chronicler from Vysoké Pole in 1950. This anonymous writer used the regime's rhetoric to describe Šimara and his associates as members of a foreign capitalist plot against the Czechoslovak state. However, he also hinted at the social disruption that state repression had caused. Six men from Vysoké Pole had been arrested, all but one married with children. Other villagers were "shaking with fear and worry that they would also be arrested."¹⁷² Šimara and the men captured with him in Jihlava, as well as others accused of participation in their conspiracy, were tried in Vsetín in July 1950. Ludvík Šmotek received a life sentence, while Antonín

¹⁶⁸ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Lenhard Rudolf a spol., Protokol sepsaný s Rudolfem Lenhardem, 25 May 1949, 6.

¹⁶⁹ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Lenhard Rudolf a spol., Státní prokuratura, oddělení Brno, Trestní oznámení, 21 September 1949, 156; ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Lenhard Rudolf a spol., Státní soud, oddělení Brno, Rozsudek, 29 April 1950, 7.

¹⁷⁰ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Lenhard Rudolf a spol., Státní soud, oddělení Brno, Rozsudek, 29 April 1950, 4.

¹⁷¹ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Lenhard Rudolf a spol., Nejvyšší soud, Rozhodnutí o odvolání, 30 June 1950, 3-4.

¹⁷² SOKA Zlín, f. ObÚ Vysoké Pole, inv. č. 2, Pamětní kniha obce Vysoké Pole, 109-110.

Kratina was sentenced to thirty years in prison. Tomeček, Pacík, Novosad, Prýšť, Vařák, Jaroslav Kratina, and Josef Fojtík each received sentences over ten years. Like Rudolf Lenhard, Alois Šimara was also sentenced to death. The sentence was carried out on April 27, 1951.¹⁷³

In the fall of 1949, Josef Vávra-Stařík was lured to Vienna, where agents of Czechoslovak State Security captured him and transported him to Ruzyně prison in Prague. Over the following months, he was repeatedly interrogated in sessions lasting up to eighteen hours at a time: about his actions in Národopisná Morava, about his involvement with Partkol, about his relationship to Czechoslovak emigres in Paris.¹⁷⁴ “He behaves calmly and is fully aware of his sentence; however, it can be sensed from his behavior that he has a certain hope of saving his life,” noted his interrogator in January.¹⁷⁵

That summer, Vávra-Stařík appeared as a witness in the trial of Milada Horáková, a former non-Communist member of the National Assembly accused of treason and conspiracy. Although he had no information to share about Horáková or her twelve co-defendants, his testimony served to discredit the Communists’ opposition abroad. After their defeat in February 1948, Vávra-Stařík testified, Czechoslovakia’s corrupt, reactionary political elite had regrouped in Western Europe, where they collaborated with imperialists and Nazis to overthrow the Communist order. Ordinary Czechoslovak emigrants in German refugee camps were forced to use discarded American tin cans as soup bowls, while Hubert

¹⁷³Two of Šimara’s associates, Timofej Simulenko and Karel Zámečník, also received death sentences. Despite evidence that he had served State Security as an informant, Zámečník was executed with Šimara. See ABS, f. A8, Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světлана” 1955-1958, podsv. II, II/a Pz 244/64, Zpráva o prověřování stížností osob, odsouzených pro činnost v protistátní organizaci “SVĚTLANA,” 8 June 1965, 8-9. The case of Simulenko, who was not executed, is addressed by Jaroslav Rokoský in “Ve stínu šibenice: Případ sovětského občana Timofeje Simulenska,” *Paměť a dějiny* 9, no. 2 (2015): 77-87.

¹⁷⁴ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světлана” 1955-1958, podsv. č. 4, Ministerstvo vnitra, inspekce ministra—komise, č.j. IM-0054/10-66 kom., Zpráva o prošetření případu “Světлана” na základě žádosti Generální prokuratury ze dne 8.6.1965 pod č.j. II/1 Pz 244/64, 27 April 1966, 6.

¹⁷⁵ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světлана” 1955-1958, podsv. č. 4, Případ X—Denní zpráva, 21 January 1950.

Ripka, the former minister of foreign affairs, lived in a luxurious apartment in a Paris hotel.

“With the cynicism of a captured spy and terrorist, Vávra-Stařík demonstrates that these traitors and imperialist agents are just the same as he is himself,” read an article in *Rudé právo*, the official newspaper of the Communist Party.¹⁷⁶

Vávra-Stařík’s testimony did not save him. On August 26, 1953, at 1:54 AM, Vávra-Stařík was brought to the gallows. “The prosecutor ordered the execution of the sentence,” recorded the transcriptionist. “The condemned did not react whatsoever. The condemned uttered the following last words: I die with thoughts of my wife—I die for the partisans’ glory.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶“Dnes bude vynesén rozsudek nad vedením záškodnického spiknutí proti republice,” *Rudé právo*, 8 June 1950, 6.

¹⁷⁷ABS, f. Inspekce ministerstva vnitra ČSSR, inv. č. 1365, Akce “Světlna” 1955-1958, podsv. č. 4, Opis protokolu o výkonu trestu smrti na odsouzeném Josefu Vávru-Staříkovi dne 26. srpna 1963, 8 October 1965, 6.

CONCLUSION

During the 1970s and 1980s, the partisan struggle in Wallachia became a legitimating myth of the Communist regime. A monument erected at Ploština in 1975, on the thirtieth anniversary of the massacre, became a site for “district peace celebrations” and Pioneer ceremonies, serving as a symbol that linked a peripheral region to the official narrative of Czechoslovak history. In the years immediately after 1948, however, the partisan legacy seemed to threaten Wallachia’s incorporation into the Communist order. This case has important implications for understanding both the consolidation of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe after the Second World War and the dynamics of resistance.

Firstly, it reveals the significance of legacies of war and occupation in shaping both resistance and repression. Former partisans recreated forms of resistance and mobilized bonds of trust and obligation forged during wartime. They understood their actions as a continuation of their struggle against Nazi occupation: “You proved yourselves in the most difficult times of our nation. Now we have need of you again,” wrote Slabík and Lenhard in a leaflet addressed to former partisan comrades and antifascist fighters.¹⁷⁸ Tureček, the State Security provocateur, also used social networks and tropes of wartime partisan resistance to create a conspiracy that was recognizable and plausible to rebellious former partisans, but also comprehensible within the framework of Stalinist ideology—and prosecutable by the state. As this case demonstrates the failure of the “third resistance” narrative to account for

¹⁷⁸ ABS, f. Vyšetřovací spisy, V-2670/Brno, Dokumenty z akce Světlana, “Legionáři, partyzáni, zahraniční vojáci, osv. političtí vězni a ostatní odbojoví pracovníci!”, 13.

the complex interactions between state and society during the earliest years of the Communist regime, it also reveals the environment in which this narrative emerged.

Světlana also demonstrates the importance of placing resistance in its specific regional context. The influence of former partisans in postwar political life contributed to the development of a specific political culture antagonistic to bureaucratic central power. Světlana emerged from the tensions between this regional political culture and that of the consolidating Communist regime. Even before the Communist coup, the Czechoslovak state repeatedly violated the ethic of effort—*zásluhy*—that legitimated political power in this region after the Second World War. Wallachia's incorporation into the Communist order after February 1948 meant that former partisans could no longer serve as the leading force in local society. The power that they believed was rightfully theirs had been usurped by the Communist Party.

Finally, the story of Světlana allows rural Czechoslovaks to emerge as active and creative political agents. Few historical studies of postwar Czechoslovakia locate political agency in the countryside. Rural people too often appear only victims of repression or objects of modernization, although their interests played an important role in shaping Communist policy.¹⁷⁹ Recent studies have highlighted both the ubiquitous dissatisfaction in Stalinist-era Czechoslovakia and the inability of rioters, protesters, and grumblers to present an alternative to the regime.¹⁸⁰ This study demonstrates that the local grievances of Wallachian farmers, villagers, and former partisans did not represent mere particularist opposition to individual

¹⁷⁹An exception is Jiří Pernes, "Proměny myšlenky kolektivizace zemědělství v politice KSČ po únoru 1948," in *Kolektivizace v Československu*, eds. Jaroslav Rokoský and Libor Svoboda (Prague: Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů, 2013), 39.

¹⁸⁰This research has focused particularly on the industrial strikes of the early 1950s. See Peter Heumos, *Vyhrnme se rukávy, než se kola zastaví! Dělníci a státní socialismus v Československu* (Prague: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2006); Kevin McDermott, "A 'Polyphony of Voices'? Czech Popular Opinion and the Slánský Affair," *Slavic Review* 67, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 840-865; Kevin McDermott, "Popular Opposition in Communist Czechoslovakia: The Plzeň Uprising, June 1953," *Contemporary European History* 19, no. 4 (2010): 287-307.

policies or a generic peasant resistance to change. Rather, they were embedded in the distinct political ethic that took root in their region after the Second World War. Světlana suggests the existence of a coherent alternative political culture in the Czechoslovak countryside.

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Místní výbory NF Valašské Klobouky

MNV Újezd

MNV Vysoké Pole

ObÚ Vysoké Pole

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